

**Inauguration Speech  
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**Glenn W. Poshard, President  
Southern Illinois University**

**September 28, 2006**

**Reverend - clergy,  
Attorney General Madigan,  
President Jones,  
Distinguished legislators,  
Chairman Tedrick,  
Board of Trustees,  
Chancellor Vandegrift,  
Chancellor Wendler,  
Honored guests.**

**Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your kind introduction. I want to thank you and the Board of Trustees for the leadership you have provided this university and for the confidence you have placed in me as the seventh President of Southern Illinois University.**

**I also want to thank Dr. Harold Bardo and members of the Presidential Search Committee for their long hours of work which culminated in me being chosen for this job.**

Jo and I have our entire families with us today and I am very grateful for that. Our families have been a great source of strength to us over the years. We love our children and grandchildren very much.

I've always been impressed by the fact that Jo, as a student here at SIU in the 1960's was a university honors student, worked six nights a week at Papa C's Pizza, graduated in four years, and just retired after thirty-four successful years of teaching elementary and secondary education.

I am humbled by the presence of each of you who have taken the time to share this moment in the history of SIU. I am honored to be appointed to lead my Alma Mater. A few months ago, we lost a very great man and a very great President of SIU, Dr. James Walker. I miss his wise counsel and his genuine friendship. If we could just have a moment of silence to remember his contributions to SIU, I would appreciate it.

I'm especially grateful for the hundreds of area high school and SIU students in attendance because it was you about whom President Morris was thinking nearly sixty years ago when he asked the most penetrating question of his inaugural address. To what are our children born? To poverty, to poor health, to ignorance - - or to hope and promise? Every President of SIU has pondered that question, a question for which President Morris had an emphatic answer, an answer borne from his examination of the poverty and desperation of the southern Illinois region.

A region characterized in 1947 by the lowest family income, the highest unemployment, the lowest home ownership, the lowest access to medical care, and the lowest standard of living in the state.

Dr. Morris could have despaired over the chaotic conditions. Instead, he embraced, in the words of the German philosopher Nietzsche an attitude which believed “one must have chaos in order to give birth to a dancing star.”

Dr. Morris saw opportunity where others saw only desperation and disorder. In the same way the Marshall Plan saved Europe after World War II, he saw and believed in a new Marshall Plan for southern Illinois.

And he knew the person and the institution that would lead this plan, and he knew how it was to be delivered. He would be that person and Southern Illinois University would be that institution and it would be delivered in his words “by encouraging the future growth of the curriculum, and the future development of research in the direction best adapted to the special assets and needs of the area.” Here was the perfect marriage among teaching, research, and service.

But beyond Dr. Morris’ vision for southern Illinois, he knew this country was about to engage in a larger vision for America, and he knew that higher education would be the most important part of that vision.

The war was ending and millions of G.I.’s were returning home and taking advantage of the G.I. Bill to attain a college education. In 1947, 1 out of every 2 college students in America was on the GI Bill.

The federal government had made the decision to invest their resources in research universities and not government-operated laboratories.

A dominant position of America in the world, both economically and militarily, meant a more prosperous future that required a college education to sustain it. But most important of all, the American public, the people, and the government saw higher education as the most important factor for building America's future and they supported it in every aspect.

Clark Kerr in his classic, "The Uses of the University," describes this period from 1945 to 1975 as the Golden Era of Higher Education in America.

Dr. Morris saw opportunity here. He knew that Southern Illinois University - then just a square block campus with 3,000 students - would not be able to accommodate the throngs of new students, either academically or in its infrastructure. SIU could not compete effectively for the research monies being offered. It could not serve the area as only a "normal school" with limited capacity.

Unless the poor farmers, coal miners, and small businessmen could be convinced to invest in their children's future here, SIU and southern Illinois could not participate in this Golden Age of Higher Education sweeping America.

And so, with vision and courage, Dr. Morris set out to marry his dream with the American dream. As Betty Mitchell pointed out in her excellent book on Delyte Morris of SIU, under his leadership for 22 years, enrollment

increased from 3,000 on one campus to 35,000 on two campuses. Faculty increased from just under 300 to over 3,600. Research funding rose from \$16,000 to \$9,000,000.

He instituted Ph.D. programs and created family housing.

He expanded residence halls, built new academic and student services buildings. He brought public television and radio to the campus, he brought the university press, the news service, and outdoor education. He provided facilities for the handicapped before society demanded them. He encouraged diversity in both faculty and student ranks. He started the distinguished professors program and hired leading scholars such as Buckminster Fuller. He started the Vocational Technical Institute and the Center for Dewey Studies. He brought a new Law School to the Carbondale campus and laid the foundation for a new Medical School in Springfield.

He began a second university at Edwardsville which today stands as one of the finest comprehensive universities in America.

But it isn't just our distant past that we celebrate today, but our recent past also. In the succeeding years since Dr. Morris, the one constant with which this University has been blessed is the excellent faculty, staff, and students which have made their mark here. Their teaching, research, and scholarship, in a hundred different areas, have contributed immensely to the well being of this nation. And the excellence continues. Cutting edge medical

and dental research. Advanced Energy research including coal and ethanol.  
Award winning novelists.

Internationally acclaimed musicians and artists. Advanced agricultural, engineering and science research. Top rated programs in mass communication, and in applied sciences and arts. Nationally recognized student centered undergraduate research. Outstanding colleges of business and education. Research contributing to preparation of some of our best sociologists and social workers. Great libraries upon which rest the very foundation of our academic teaching and learning. And some of our finest teachers, our coaches, who have taken both the Salukis and the Cougars to stratospheric heights in the NCAA.

One only needs to take a look at the beauty of our campuses and the efficiency of our operations to understand the quality of our staff. We have a proud past which we celebrate today.

But what of our future? After sixty years, shall we ask the question anew? To what are our children born?

Today, the vaulted place of public higher education in America is being challenged at both the State and national levels. Indebtedness, the rising cost of health care, infrastructure needs, and massive military expenditures have reduced governmental support to dangerous levels.

The public research funds are proportionally less today and more competitive than at any time in our history. Even though the Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education concluded that a strong Pell Grant program will do as much for America today as the GI Bill did a half century ago, no such support is forthcoming.

Very few of the crucial factors which contributed to the Golden Age of Higher Education in the fifties, sixties, and seventies are present today.

So while our vision of the future must be born out of hard work and hope, it must also be chiseled from the hard granite of reality.

It is a vision of challenge, a vision of change to stop the drift toward "second class citizenship" for higher education in the hierarchal needs of America.

Our vision must begin with our traditional values of accessibility, affordability, and citizenship preparation.

From the passage of the Morrill Act of 1862 setting aside land in each state for development of a public university, through the development of the normal schools out of which our University was chartered, to the GI Bill, and later the development of the Community College system, we have always held to the principle that open access was tantamount to, in President Lincoln's words, "the peoples' right to rise."

No longer was higher education limited to the wealthy and privileged classes. Jefferson said that virtue and talent is sown as liberally among the

poor as the rich. The special contribution that higher education makes to the future of America is to ensure “equality of opportunity.” The people cannot rise, either socially or economically, without that opportunity. The people of southern Illinois have risen above many crises because this University has kept its doors open to students from every social and economic strata.

Every obstacle to accessibility, whether financial or academic, must be overcome, and one obstacle is as egregious as the other.

Too many students come to SIU unprepared for a university education. Poor schools, poor communities, and inadequate parental involvement contribute to an excessive failure rate for these young people. Our retention and graduation rates for these students are unacceptable. We cannot improve access for these students without serious K-12 reform directed toward college preparation. We are not in the business to ensure failure, and we invite our partners in elementary and high schools, as well as community colleges, to join us in developing a comprehensive, seamless, primary-through-college educational experience, which brings students to SIU prepared to succeed, not destined to fail.

We, at this University, must lead that effort. Two thirds of American students are disqualified from college, regardless of financial considerations, because they lack academic qualifications needed to attend, and remediation, when a student gets here, falls far short of ensuring success.

Higher education in America exists for many reasons, but two of the most important are to give students the skills to get a job while preparing them to be citizens in a democracy. One is a private benefit, the other is a public good. And SIU has a proud history of turning out well rounded students who meet both standards.

Employers want students who are proficient in the academics, the country needs students who are civic minded, able to grapple with complex social and political issues.

Today with declining federal and state support, the great tradition of American higher education being affordable to all is now, in the words of Alice Chandler, President Emeritus of the State University of New York, being transformed from "a public good supported by the public purse to private benefits financed by personal debt." A massive transfer from taxes to tuition, making it impossible for millions of middle and low income students to attend college.

Over the past several years, double digit increases in tuition have outstripped increases in the cost of health care and run far ahead of increases in family income. How can we build better citizens if the very institution charged with that responsibility must now close the doors on the students who need it most? The Federal government's Advisory Committee on Financial Assistance calculates that each year 400,000 academically qualified students from middle and low income families fail to attend college because they

cannot afford it. Up to 2.4 million bachelor's degrees will be lost in this current decade because of financial barriers faced by students.

In America today, we spend nearly \$35,000 a year to keep a person in prison and about \$6,000.00 a year to educate our children. Derek Bok, the President of Harvard University, often made the statement, "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance."

We, here at SIU, must take a leadership role in forging a new relationship with our government leaders. It's not enough to tell our legislators what we do, we must start helping them to understand what the state and the nation receive as a result of our work. An educated workforce that drives a new knowledge-based economy and people who practice their roles as good, caring citizens in a democracy is our unique contribution to the nation.

*Brown vs. Board of Education*, the historic 1954 Supreme Court decision undoing segregation in education, recognized that "education is the very foundation of good citizenship."

The face of America is changing rapidly and SIU must reflect that face. It is in our best interest to have a diverse faculty and student body and that is central to the mission of SIU. For the years that we have our students here, it is to their advantage, and ours, to be exposed to the greatest range of ideas and perspectives, of cultural, ethnic, social, and religious values. In the bold new

future of America, the most essential requirement for effective citizenship will be our willingness to understand and appreciate these differences.

And here, at SIU, is where that exposure must begin. We should become more, not less, diverse. When our students leave us and move to communities across this country where they will get a job, build a home, and raise their families, they will want good neighbors and they will want to be a good neighbor. And that means they must have the skills to “get along” in a very diverse America. We also need to bring more international students to our home, and send more American students to theirs. Not only must our students learn to be citizens of America, it is increasingly important that they learn to be citizens of the world.

We must make the opportunity available for all of our students to participate in study abroad as part of their University education.

In the National Academy of Sciences and Engineering’s most recent report, “Rising Above the Gathering Storm,” it is emphasized that “our country’s longstanding scientific and technological advantage, and competitiveness is at risk.”

In 2003, only three American companies ranked among the top ten recipients of patents granted by the US Patent and Trademark Office.

In 2004, 66% of undergraduates in Japan received their degrees in science and engineering, in China 59%, and in the US 32%.

In 2004, China graduated 350,000 engineers, computer scientists, and information technologists, passing the US who graduated 140,000, to become the world leader of exporting IT products.

And yet, federal funding of research in the physical sciences, as a percentage of gross domestic product, was 45% less in FY 2004 than in FY 1976.

It has been American research conducted in our great public research universities, such as SIU, that has been responsible for solving most of this country's economic, technological, and social problems.

We can no longer afford a public school system in which half of the middle school math and science teachers did not major or minor in the courses they're teaching. Teachers should be qualified to teach their discipline, not just placed in the classroom to fill a void. It is little wonder that our twelfth grade math scores are some of the lowest among modern, educated nations. Susan Hockfield, President of MIT, reminds us that we "are not qualified to take on the core work of primary and secondary education..., but we can build better bridges."

And this University will build those bridges. We train the teachers. We set the standards. And ultimately, we bear the responsibility for leading the effort to work with our partners to turn this situation around so that students who come to SIU are capable of handling the rigorous math and science requirements needed for undergraduate, as well as graduate, research. The College Board of Education tells us that students who take two or more

Advanced Placement Classes in high school are twice as likely to graduate from college on time as students who do not take any. Children from low income families who acquire strong math skills by the eighth grade are ten times more likely to finish college than their underprivileged peers.

Our University and our country should be paying attention to these statistics, and we will. We will find the resources for additional scholarships, fellowships, assistantships at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and we will find the skilled researchers to teach and mentor them.

But it is not only in the physical sciences that the measure of a great University is taken.

It is not enough for students to come here to study mathematics, physics, and chemistry. The story is told that the great scientist and mathematician Albert Einstein was asked, assuming we found other intelligence in the universe, what should we send out to them to let them know how advanced we are?

And Einstein's response was "Bach, send them endless Bach." When students come here, we want them to understand the importance of the arts. We want them to ask and grapple with the universal questions of reflective thinking. Who am I? Why am I here? What's my purpose for being? It is our music, our art, our dance, our philosophy, our poetry that makes us most human and allows us to become better citizens because we are more able to

feel what others feel, to see others as we see ourselves, to understand that through the human condition we are all connected, different but the same.

Without the preservation and enhancement of the Arts, our vision for the future of SIU would be incomplete.

For all of our existence, we have been a “good citizen” University to our surrounding communities. Every one of our colleges on both campuses have significant educational and economic development outreach. Our medical and dental schools have several clinics which serve the less fortunate. Our schools of music perform concerts in many southern Illinois communities every year. It is important that we maintain that connectedness to the area which we serve, and we will renew that effort with vigor. But the time has come for us to rebuild our own spirit of community.

Clark Kerr reminds us that there are many external threats to the sense of community in the Academy which have eroded our allegiance to the institution. A stronger influence by the State, a stronger influence by the economic market, reduced financial resources, and the movement of advanced education and research increasingly away from universities. But Kerr says the greatest threats to the university will be those which arise from within. More bureaucracy, less willingness to engage in shared governance, and teachers and administrators of the “me” generation who are very “attentive” to their own work but neglect academic citizenship, particularly their assistance to colleagues and students.

American higher education, including SIU, is threatened by the breakdown of the connectedness that has held us together as a community for nearly one hundred and fifty years.

Those of us who work in higher education in America are the freest people on the face of the earth. We highly value our academic freedom, our right to dissent, our open, inclusive, sharing and collaborative environment. But we lack unity. We lack community. I am often haunted by the penetrating question of Saul Bellow. He said “we survived the ordeal of the Holocaust, but will we survive the ordeal of freedom?”

When I was in high school, my generation was challenged by President Kennedy.

He admonished us to “ask not what your country can do for you, rather ask what you can do for your country.”

When I was a student here, we were challenged by President Morris to study, and to give back to our communities. Today, I challenge each administrator, each member of the faculty and staff, and each student to help us answer President Morris’ question affirmatively. Together, we will honor our tradition of accessibility and affordability. Together, we will build good citizens of America and good citizens of the world. Together, we will ensure that the face of SIU reflects the face of America in our faculty, staff, and our students.

Together, we will join the ranks of America's great research and comprehensive universities. Together, we will be a "good citizen" university in reaching out to our surrounding communities with our resources. And together, we will build unity, build community, on our campuses and across our system - and then we shall renew our spirit of greatness for our beloved SIU.

This effort will require selfless leadership. Lao Tzu, the great Chinese philosopher, described this type of leadership 2500 years ago. The least effective leader is that person who is feared by the people. A more effective leader is the person who is loved and even revered by the people.

But the most effective leader is that leader who, when the task is accomplished, the people will say, we did it ourselves. The best leaders are those the people hardly know exist. For those of us in leadership, we can effect change, or we can take credit for change, but we cannot do both.

As you can see by now, my vision for SIU is my story.

Forty years ago, I came here as a poor kid from a poor family with only the GI Bill for support. I was the first one from our family to attend college. SIU was open to me and it was affordable. And here I met the world. Professors and students of every color, of every ethnic and social group, of every religion.

The artificial walls which divided me from others because of my homogenous upbringing were breached here, and I learned the true meaning

of citizenship. Whatever good I have accomplished with my life, whatever contributions I have made, I owe to the education I received at this great university. I'm extremely proud of SIUC and SIUE and the entire SIU family. My vision is not new, but it seeks to renew the commitments of our proud history.

In the beautiful words of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, we ponder our past.

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,  
 Moves on; nor all your Piety nor Wit  
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,  
 Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

We seek not to rewrite our history, nor to squander time or tears in wishing we could relive parts of it again. We simply honor our past.

But there are critics who say, "Just accept that our best days are behind us. Just accept that the vision still tarries, the commitment left unfulfilled, the drift to mediocrity assured."

To these critics, I offer words from my favorite American poet, Robert Frost in his powerfully reflective poem "Reluctance".

When to the heart of man  
 Was it ever less than a treason  
 To go with the drift of things,  
 To yield with a grace to reason,

And bow and accept the end

Of a love or a season?

We will never yield to the critics. Never accept the "drift of things".

Never bow and accept the end of our season.

In a very personal way, T.S. Eliot described this homecoming for me.

He said "We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started, and to know the place for the first time."

And so, for me, all the exploration from the time I started here as a student in 1966 until now, forty years later, only leads me back to President Morris' question. This time, though, I know the answer. To what are our children born? To hope, to opportunity, to the future that only our Southern Illinois University can offer.

Thank You.