

2022
COLLEGE CHANGES EVERYTHING[®]
CONFERENCE

Stronger Together:

Keeping Illinois Students in Illinois for College

Stronger Together:

Salute to Illinois Scholars Program

Dena Lawrence
Senior Project Coordinator
University of Illinois System

Jennifer Harbaugh
Associate Director of Admissions
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

Abel Montoya
Director of Outreach Operations
Illinois Student Assistance Commission

Salute to Illinois Scholars (SIS)

a bit of history

- Outmigration of IL college-ready HS students
 - and transfer students
- Challenge from legislators to UI President for help
- Budget constraints during impasse years
- Sought a collaborative approach
- UI model event: Salute to Academic Achievement
- Started with SIS South in 2017
- Added a second SIS event (Northwest) in 2018
- Due to COVID, transitioned to virtual event in 2020

» Remaining virtual so all 12 publics can participate together!

SIS F2F event model:

Not your typical college fair

- Invitation only
 - Printed on linen card stock, sent via US mail
- College ready high school seniors
 - SAT 1060 (ACT of 21) & 3.0 GPA
 - HS Counselor nominations
- Community college students
 - PTK member eligible
 - Transfer are 23% of UI undergraduates
- Parents/families welcome
 - “co-purchasers”, pipeline

SIS F2F event model:

Not your typical college fair

- Familiar Program aspects: the fair
 - Academic Programs
 - Admission info
 - Campus life
- Financial Aid
 - Illinois Student Assistance Commission
 - Free resources; consistent information
 - Cuts back on number of tables needed

SIS F2F event model:

Not your typical college fair

Dr. David Glassman, EIU President:

“Salute to Illinois Scholars has been an exceptional opportunity to partner with our colleagues across the region to increase awareness and ensure the best and the brightest Illinois students fulfill their college aspirations right here in Illinois.”

- Cooperation, not competition
 - Share data on attending students
- Collaborative planning committee
- Energizing each university’s team
- Encourage students to check out multiple universities
 - We all want the best fit for the students!

SIS F2F event model:

Not your typical college fair

- Roadshow, off the beaten path
- A genuine, physical manifestation of our desire to recruit and enroll these students
 - Keeping them in Illinois
 - We know the impact of having them stay here!
- We are recruiting the family; we want to create a pipeline to
 - The younger siblings
 - The high schools
 - The community colleges

SIS F2F event model:

Not your typical college fair

“Only connect!” E.M. Forster

- Admission application fee waiver to ALL state universities
- Formal luncheon
- Student Speakers
- Presents Panel
- Certificates of Academic Achievement
- Students get picture taken by professional photographer

SIS F2F event model:

Not your typical college fair

“Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

- The “We want you!” message is clear and, hopefully compelling
- We want to make the students, families, and communities feel connected to their universities
- And the universities to communities
- Hence . . . Presidents and Chancellors

SIS F2F event model: Attendance

2017	SIS South	Show Rate		
Students	173	88%		
Parents/Guests	196			
Staff	97			
Total	466			
2018	SIS South	Show Rate	SIS Northwest	Show Rate
Students	158	87%	171	90%
Parents/Guests	192		239	
Staff	96		89	
Total	446		499	
2019	SIS South	Show Rate	SIS Northwest	Show Rate
Students	241	85%	229	85%
Parents/Guests	206		194	
Staff	103		103	
Total	550		526	

SIS F2F event model - What students said

- “I got introduced to some of the faculty at the attending colleges, and that influenced me to apply to them.”
- “More interested because the schools have more degree options than I thought.”
- “Helpful in narrowing down my options”
- “It showed me more options for what I am looking for in a college.”
- “Speaking with some of the students and hearing about their experiences”
- “... another university that was nowhere on my radar now has some of my interest; they were well prepared, knowledgeable, and helpful.”
- “I learned more about the different degrees at one of the universities that I was considering.”
- “I learned I do not want to go to a large school.”
- “I absolutely loved it. If anyone is on the edge about which college to attend, I highly suggest that they attend SIS if they are invited. It really helped me decide between my two college choices!”

SIS F2F event model: Was it working?

- Our data showed that SIS students were yielding at a higher rate than a similarly qualified cohort who did not attend.
- Impacting college-going culture and keeping students in Illinois.
- EIU reported yield rate has consistently grown from SIS, year over year.
- Enhancing collaboration across universities

SIS: Challenges

- Growth
- Availability of large venues in target areas
- COVID 2020
 - HS testing data was not available
 - Used PSAT
 - HS counselor nomination process was interrupted
 - Quick transition to online platform; learning curve
 - How to recreate some special aspects; enhance impact
- COVID 2021
 - Learning loss affected test scores
 - Test optional/blind admissions reduced # of scores available
 - Show rate for free, virtual events
 - Virtual event burnout; how to maintain/increase interest

» Keeping it fresh

SIS: Virtual

Kept/enhanced most critical elements

- Invitation only; adjusted minimum for COVID
 - High school and transfer students
- 12 public universities & ISAC together
- ISAC presentation on paying for college
- Admission application fee waivers
- Certificates of achievement mailed to students
- Admissions booths (text/chat/video)
- Current student booths (text/chat/video)
- Welcome videos from Presidents & Lt. Governor

SIS Virtual: Attendance

- Only student participant data available
 - Parents/guests did not login separately to any notable degree; rather participated under students' login.
 - 2020
 - Students registered: 406
 - Students attended: 290
 - 71.4% show rate
 - 2021
 - Students registered: 487
 - Students attended: 352
 - For the first time, one-third of these were transfer students!
 - 72.2% show rate
- » Show rates above 70% are great for free, online events!

SIS Virtual- What attendees said

- “Last nights event was perfect as virtual. We could talk back and forth by audio. The admin and students were great at addressing our questions and pointing us in the right direction for my childs career path. I hope to see future virtual events for my younger children that will some day become seniors. Financial aid meeting was very informative for tackling the FAFSA. Great virtual event.....definitely 5 gold stars. Thanks for assisting in my childs future!!!!!!!!!!”
- “I thought that the information given about financial aid was outstanding. Very well put together, organized, and presented.”
- “I liked being able to see so much information about each school in one place.”
- “Talking to the students helped me get more of a feel for the student life on campus first hand, thus making me more interested after hearing all the good things they said.”
- “I am more interested because I got a lot more information about benefits and scholarships.”
 - 94% of student survey respondents said SIS affected their plans - in that they were equally or more interested in an Illinois public university after attending

SIS: Future Plans

- Remain virtual for full collaboration/participation of Illinois' 12 public universities
- Add a parent session
- Include students in welcome video
- Scholarship(s)
- Revisit model for booth staffing
 - Platform enhancements have provided for an improved approach
- Improve website for pre-event information and tips for success.

Questions?

Dena Lawrence

denalawr@uillinois.edu

Jennifer Harbaugh

jharbau@siue.edu

Abel Montoya

Abel.Montoya@illinois.gov

