
Regional

The consequences of the election for higher ed

“So, now what?” That is the question some people are asking when it comes to higher education after one of the longest and most contentious presidential elections in American history. The question comes up not only because of the results, but also because higher education is facing one of its most grave situations in its history due to, among other things, decreasing funding, exorbitant student debt and bad press.

So what can we expect in the months and years to come based on the platform and statements issued by the leaders of the upcoming administration? Here is a sample.

Diminishing funding: The president-elect has already stated that, “If the federal government is going to subsidize student loans, it has a right to expect that colleges work hard to control costs and invest their resources in their students. If colleges refuse to take this responsibility seriously, they will be held accountable.” What he fails to take into account is that because of diminishing state support most public colleges and universities have seen increasing tuition and fees as their only option. The blame game played by many state politicians has worked very well. They blame college administrators for the increasing costs, not themselves for dramatically cutting state funding.

Intervention in the financing of private colleges: Trump has made threats of ending the tax-exempt status of colleges and universities with large endowments. He has stated that colleges need “to spend endowments on their students, not themselves They need to use that money to cut the college debt and cut tuition, and they have to do it quickly.” This

Dr. Aldemaro Romero Jr. Letters from Academia

is one of the favorite lines of attack by the party of the upcoming administration. In order to divert their own responsibility regarding the lack of funding from the public sector, they blame private colleges and universities for the cost of college. The problem is that most of the money in those endowments is earmarked, meaning the college is contractually obligated to use it for specific purposes according to the wishes of the donors. And most of those endowments are in the form of scholarships for students anyway. The government cannot mandate that colleges break their contracts with donors. Terminating the tax-exempt status of private colleges will only further undermine their ability to receive donations, many of which are destined to help students with low financial resources.

More scam “universities”: For-profit institutions, such as the now defunct “Trump University,” are the main source of student debt, using federal funds to operate on a clear scheme of corporate welfare. They will probably increase in numbers and size under a Trump administration due to a relaxing of federal regulations on them. In fact, the day after the election their value on the stock market rose dramatically.

Increased regulations of day-to-day operations: Trump has said colleges could save money by eliminating the

“tremendous bloat” in their administrations. Although there has been an increase in the number of administrators in higher education, that has been in response to both federal and state mandates to comply with laws enacted at both levels. Conservatives have been increasing oversight of the everyday operations of higher education institutions by enacting intrusive laws that require more compliance. These regulations, in turn, require more administrators to oversee them. Will the upcoming administration reconcile their repulsion for more government regulations with their desire to intervene in the daily affairs of colleges?

Student debt: Although the president-elect has stated that he will establish repayment of student debt based on income (something generally backed by Democrats and Republicans alike), he has provided few details. Not only that, given that such a plan would require federal funding, where is that money going to come from when he has already announced an increase in military spending and tax cuts that will, most likely, balloon the national debt?

Diminishing number of international students: Many public colleges and universities have looked to the enrollment of more international students to, in part, make up for the loss of state funding. After the 9/11 attacks, the number of international students coming to the United States decreased by 25 percent and took several years to rebound to previous levels. Now we will have a president who has used xenophobic statements to refer to people from other countries. The climate created by those statements will result in a dramatic decrease in the number of international students, and with it a devastating effect on the finances of many public colleges

and universities.

Worsening race relations: Within 48 hours after the election results were announced, numerous racial incidents were reported on campuses across the country. Physical attacks on Muslim students, a proliferation of depictions of nooses, white students in blackface, some chanting “white power,” and xenophobic and other bigoted chalkings have multiplied at an alarming rate. If the climate over race relations was bad before the elections, it is going to get worse now that the new administration is clearly against anything that may resemble political correctness.

Sexual attacks: One of the worst kept secrets on campuses is the large number of sexual attacks against women. The main legal instrument to combat such assaults is Title IX, a portion of the U.S. Education Amendments of 1972 that states (in part) that:

“No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” Trump has been very explicit in promising to weaken the enforcement provisions of this law and of his desire to eliminate the government branch in charge of its enforcement, the Department of Education.

What should we do to ameliorate these effects? That will be discussed in this very column next week.

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Carol Arnett/Intelligencer

Music masters

The Illinois Music Educators Association (ILMEA) held the District 6 Music Festival at Edwardsville High School on Saturday, Nov. 5. Students in chorus, band, and orchestra from throughout the district auditioned in October to participate. They arrived at EHS on Saturday morning and rehearsed for the concerts that were held in the afternoon. In this photo, the middle schools' orchestra, chorus, and band perform. The high school concert followed the middle school concert.

prosecutors say. Collier had confessed to all three bank robberies, claiming they were motivated "by his need to buy heroin and pay for hotel rooms and food," according to the news release.

The case was investigated by the Edwardsville Police Department, the Fairview Heights Police Department, the Illinois State Police Metro-East Forensic Laboratory, the St. Peters Police Department, and the FBI.

The case is being handled by U.S. Assistant Attorney Angela Scott. Collier is scheduled for sentencing on Feb. 27, 2017.

VOTE

Continued from Page 1

Madison County voters also favored Tammy Duckworth for U.S. Senate. Duckworth, a Democrat, received just over 50 percent of the vote in Madison County to just over 44 percent for Republican incumbent Mark Kirk.

In several big local races, voters also went for change. Treasurer Kurt Prenzler, a Republican, is the new County Board Chairman. In a nail-biter, he squeezed past long-time incumbent Alan Dunstan, 50.2 percent to 49.8 percent.

There was also a changing of the guard on the Madison County Board. Surprisingly, the County Board now has more Republicans than Democrats, 15-13 with one independent.

Madison County voters also voted to retain Circuit Judges William Mudge and Andy Matoesian.

In the Fifth District Appellate Court race, Republican John Barberis defeated Brad Bleyer. Barberis pulled down just under 55 percent of the vote to just over 45 percent of the vote for Bleyer.