1943

The Case for U. S. I.

Southern Illinois State Normal University

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In the 1940s, Southern Illinois State Normal University was transitioning from a normal school into the university it is today. During this decade, university officials produced documentation to help justify this transformation to the Illinois General Assembly. This undated document likely coincides with The Southern Alumnus issue of January 1943, which makes an argument for transforming from a teacher’s college into a university. During the planning stages, the university name was envisioned to be the University of Southern Illinois (USI). It discusses the educational and economic needs in Southern Illinois.

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The Case for U. S. I.

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS NORMAL UNIVERSITY SHOULD BE CONVERTED INTO THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS BECAUSE....

I. The people of Southern Illinois do not have the educational opportunities available to other citizens of the state.

II. Many young people in Southern Illinois do not especially want to teach, but cannot afford to go elsewhere for advanced training in their special fields.

III. The people of Southern Illinois need and deserve an educated leadership.

IV. Southern Illinois is a region worth developing.

V. The people of Southern Illinois need and deserve vocational training.

VI. The people of Southern Illinois need and deserve a center for preserving and developing the cultural life of the region.

VII. Southern Illinois Normal University can no longer honestly function as a school for teacher training only.

VIII. The whole state of Illinois would benefit from improved opportunities for education in Southern Illinois.

IX. Conversion now would cost little.

X. The post-war period will bring new problems to the region—problems which only a university can handle and which it must prepare now to solve.

XI. The best place in which to keep Illinois abreast of broad educational advances is Southern Illinois, for it offers unique opportunities for regional services, experimentation, and pioneering developments.
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS NORMAL UNIVERSITY SHOULD BE CONVERTED INTO THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS BECAUSE....

The people of Southern Illinois do not have the educational opportunities available to other citizens of the state.

The Northern 71 counties of Illinois have a total of 43 four year colleges accredited by the North Central Association, or an average of one college to every three counties.

The Southern 31 counties have but one four year college accredited by the North Central Association, and that a teachers' college.

In the Northern 71 counties there is an accredited college for every 165,000 people. In the Southern 31 counties there is but one accredited college for nearly 1,000,000 people. If we consider distances and wealth, the disparity is much greater even than that indicated by these figures.

Southern Illinois is not asking for a college for every three counties, or a college for every 165,000 of its people. What it does ask is the privilege of making its one college an institution that can serve the social, economic, and cultural needs of its people more adequately than at present. The need is great. A college limited to the training of teachers cannot meet this need. Only a university equipped to solve the vocational, industrial, and cultural problems of the region can meet the urgent needs of the 31 counties of Southern Illinois.

In summary, Southern Illinois has no great university, no accredited liberal arts college, and only one teachers college. Northern Illinois has three great universities, 35 accredited liberal arts colleges, and five teachers colleges.
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS NORMAL UNIVERSITY SHOULD BE CONVERTED INTO THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS BECAUSE...

Many young people in Southern Illinois do not especially want to teach, but cannot afford to go elsewhere for advanced training in their special fields.

The schools in a state should be located in areas where they will serve the greatest numbers, so that the factors of distance and expense will be equalized as much as possible.

The Chicago area, of course, has the greatest concentration of population in Illinois. The two other great concentrations are both in the South, namely, the East St. Louis area and the Herrin area. Both these areas rely upon a supply of highly skilled labor. Both need guidance and training for work in social, economic, and industrial fields which a college limited to teacher training cannot well offer. The administration and faculty of Southern Illinois Normal University are acutely aware of the needs of this section of the state. They have done what they can within the limitations set upon the activities of their college by its founders seventy years ago.

True, there are many colleges and universities outside the region which welcome students from Southern Illinois. A limited number of young men and women can afford to attend these institutions. But the expenses of travelling, the higher living costs, and the high tuition fees make it impossible for a vast majority to go away, especially in view of the low incomes they and their parents have. An analysis of 1929 farm incomes in eleven districts of the state showed that in Southern Illinois the district having the lowest income per farm averaged $842 and the district having the highest averaged only $1516. Of the districts outside Southern Illinois, only one had an average below $2000 (it averaged $1181) and four had averages above $3000. For all practical purposes, the door of opportunity is closed to many Southern Illinois students of limited means.

Furthermore, it is a well established fact that a large majority of college students all over the country enroll in colleges within a hundred miles of their home towns. If there is no college nearby, many young people simply stay at home.

With the creation of a University of Southern Illinois, the young people of Southern Illinois would be able to continue their education in other fields than teaching. The obstacle of distance would be largely removed, and with it the obstacle of prohibitive cost.
The people of Southern Illinois need and deserve an educated leadership.

Southern Illinois is picturesque and beautiful. The climate is friendly; the people are accommodating, willing, and patient. But parts of the region have long been economically depleted and lagging in social and cultural matters for lack of a sufficient number of educated leaders.

Something like a half, probably more than half, of the acreage in the region is agriculturally unproductive because of soil erosion and exhaustion. But in spite of the impoverishment that threatens the area, the people are still here, planting the hilltops to fruit and the bottoms to grain and cotton. For many of them, marginal subsistence has become a way of life.

And with economic poverty goes cultural poverty. Many schools are poorly equipped; most teachers are underpaid; and the problem of raising educational standards cannot be solved by educators alone. There is lack of adequate guidance in the arts, in architecture, in housing. Vocational training and retraining, so necessary to a depleted area, are largely unobtainable within it.

Furthermore, there is a constant drain on the leadership. The young people who must leave Southern Illinois do not always return to give the region the benefit of their specialized training. Southern Illinois is a country that numbers of them are "glad to be from." Even if the school were to emphasize junior college work in general education, the loss of its most promising and brilliant students by transfer to other areas would continue. The serious economic and social problems here will never be solved by our absentee educated people.

Released from the bonds placed upon it long ago by founders who could not conceive the present needs of the region, our school could go a long way towards solving these problems. A University of Southern Illinois could provide leaders who would help the area revive and prosper.

The people of Southern Illinois have given great men to Illinois and to the nation. They have a right to a little attention from the state as a whole and to properly trained leaders for themselves.
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS NORMAL UNIVERSITY SHOULD BE CONVERTED INTO THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS BECAUSE....

Southern Illinois is a region worth developing.

Although the region is economically undeveloped, its resources and activities are diversified. It is rich in natural resources for industry, with its vast oil and coal fields; its fluor spar, clay, lime, and water (Crab Orchard Lake). Through careful reforestation, the timbered areas could be made immensely valuable without reducing the amount of land available for agriculture.

There is a vast pool of semi-skilled laborers, many of whom, for lack of opportunity to work, have been forced until recently to depend upon state aid. With the facilities provided by a University of Southern Illinois, these men could be retrained to help make the region self-sustaining. The industrial and commercial possibilities of the area have never been fully explored and exploited for lack of enough trained men to survey and attack them.

Southern Illinois is also diversified agriculturally, with orchards, small fruit farms, truck farms, dairies, stock raisers, cotton growers, and general farmers. Although the soil is not so rich as that in Central Illinois, skillful farming can make the region productive and prosperous. Erosion can be controlled; soil fertility can be restored. A University of Southern Illinois could directly assist the agricultural experts to raise the standards of farming in the whole region.

Opportunities for training the skilled workers needed to develop the industrial and agricultural possibilities of Southern Illinois cannot be provided by a school restricted to training teachers or to a bare two years of general education. They have not been and are not likely to be provided by schools outside the region, which have their own areas and interests to serve and which are too expensive for many Southern Illinoisans. The region needs reconstruction, rehabilitation, and general research into its possibilities. These a University of Southern Illinois could help provide.
Southern Illinois Normal University can no longer honestly function as a school for teacher training only.

More than any other institution of higher learning in Illinois, Southern Illinois Normal University is a regional college. Large numbers of students, who cannot afford to go elsewhere, come here for training in agriculture, commerce, and industry; and many others come for their pre-professional training in medicine, dentistry, law, etc. The school has tried to meet the needs and demands of the public as best it can under present restrictions. In brief, there has been tremendous pressure to offer courses equivalent to those offered in the universities, to expand its services far beyond anything envisioned by its original founders or implied in the name under which it now operates.

Since this pressure to expand has arisen from the actual needs of the citizens of Illinois, it should be openly recognized and frankly accommodated. Obsolete regulations compelling the school to cater to the many demands of its people under the guise of teacher training should be abandoned.

Every student now enrolling, unless he wishes to pay double tuition, must sign a pledge that he will teach in the public schools of Illinois for as long a time as he has attended college. This pledge embarrasses many students who sign it in good faith but find themselves in the end unwilling to teach. It sometimes forces into the teaching profession young people who would be better off elsewhere, thereby filling our public schools with teachers who have no interest in teaching.

The pledge actually puts a premium on dishonesty, for, it is feared, many students sign it to save money when they have not the remotest intention of teaching. It embarrasses the faculty and administration, who would be placed in the ridiculous position of questioning each student's good faith by refusing to accept his pledge and so must advise him to take courses that will be of no use to him. If the college were allowed to train him in other fields, it could try to determine his aptitudes and direct him into the right field. As it is now, the staff recognizes that many students not especially qualified to teach must go to college here or not at all. If these students can meet the minimum requirements, the college cannot well exclude them.

It is not fair to condemn the young people of a whole region to preparing themselves for a single profession, the most poorly rewarded of all. It is not fair to insist that they meet the requirements for certification when they have no desire to certificate. It is not fair that they should be forced into evasiveness because of outmoded requirements.

A regional college cannot avoid its responsibilities to the people it serves. It grows with the times; and if its growth is natural and inevitable, every effort should be made to encourage it. An educational institution that is becoming a university in fact should become a university in name also.
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS NORMAL UNIVERSITY SHOULD BE CONVERTED INTO THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS BECAUSE....

The whole state of Illinois would benefit from improved opportunities for education in Southern Illinois.

Enriching Southern Illinois is enriching the whole state. Given sufficient leadership and training, the people could help make Southern Illinois self-sufficient and not a drain upon the taxpayers of the rest of the state. The graduates of the University of Southern Illinois, better equipped than they can be equipped by a teachers college, would go out as significant additions to the wealth of the state.

Furthermore, the standard of education in all Illinois would obviously rise if its most neglected area were cared for. The Biennial Survey of Education, 1937-1938, places Illinois in an unenviable position among the states. Although Illinois ranked eighth in per capita income, it ranked a lowly thirty-second in per capita state appropriations for higher education. These figures may come as a surprise to people who have always thought of Illinois as one of the traditional strongholds of state-supported institutions of higher learning.

The bill to convert Southern Illinois Normal University into the University of Southern Illinois would provide for enlarging the facilities of the state educational system to care for the needs of a hitherto neglected area and hence restore to Illinois some of its lost prestige as a leader in state-supported education.

Another gain for all Illinois would arise from the fact that certain students who now leave the state would attend the University of Southern Illinois, because it will emphasize vocational and cultural fields that the great universities upstate have not found it advisable to emphasize. Such nearby states as Missouri, Iowa, and Indiana now take away some of our most capable students, who do not find their needs served by any existing Illinois institution.

Nor would the opening up of these fields at a University of Southern Illinois harm the upstate schools, for it would be alone in the region it serves. It might deflect a very few students to Carbondale, but any marked increase in its enrollment would come from among those who cannot now attend any university.

Surely the great universities to the north can be trusted not to take the position of opposing the advancement of education in Illinois as a whole by denying to the many young people who cannot afford to leave Southern Illinois the opportunity of college training in fields other than teaching.
Conversion now would cost little.

Whatever the advantages of a proposal, the question of cost is often paramount. Can the state of Illinois afford to finance a University of Southern Illinois?

Perhaps the most significant fact about the proposed conversion is that it could begin almost immediately without adding any great burden to the taxpayers. Unless the war ends suddenly, the influx of new students will be gradual. On its proposed budget for the next biennium, with its present staff, and with buildings and equipment now available, the school could offer some of the advantages of a University. (A detailed supplement on this point will follow.) The proposed bill would legalize functions for which there is now a great public demand. It would at once make possible certain additional services by releasing many students and faculty members from the present teacher training requirements and enabling them to plan a university program. It would thereby lead to economies in both the time and the money now expended.

Furthermore, the bill provides against the useless overlapping of the more expensive facilities already available at Urbana. The new institution would not attempt to set up colleges of law, medicine, or pharmacy, which are adequately provided by the present state university.

Eventually, of course, a University of Southern Illinois would have to have a larger budget to care for an increased enrollment. By making it impossible for many young people to attend any but a teachers college, the state could continue to economize; but such economy discriminates against a whole region. Illinois certainly intends to give all its young people an equal opportunity for higher education. The young people of Southern Illinois can be educated on the present campus at Carbondale more cheaply than anywhere else.

With educated leaders, as we have pointed out, the region could come much closer to sustaining itself than at present. During the recent depression, the Southern Illinois coal field was one of the most seriously afflicted parts of the whole United States. Many millions of dollars were spent by the federal and state governments on relief and public works to sustain the region during the whole period of the depression. Besides the direct cost of at least a million dollars a month to the taxpayers of state and nation, there was a very much greater cost in lost business and depreciated property values, in reduced income and bankruptcy. Much of this no doubt was inevitable, but neglect of education in the area during the past half century was certainly responsible in part for this hundred million dollar waste during the past ten years.

(continued)
Southern Illinois can rehabilitate itself only by the generous provision of education of the broadest type. Where educational standards are low, the people are poor, regardless of natural wealth. Any investment in a real University of Southern Illinois to give instruction, research, inspiration, and leadership to the area will in time produce generous dividends in social stability and sound economic development. It will not only provide the great intangible values that education brings to a free people but also save the taxpayers money formerly spent on various kinds of relief and enrich the state in material goods. Hence all business and governmental agencies have a vital interest in the support and improvement of education in Southern Illinois.

Illinois must eventually do something to catch up with the rest of the states in its expenditures for higher education. It is certainly wealthy enough to provide equality of opportunity for all its young people. Other states with only a fraction of its wealth and population (for example, Oregon, Washington, Oklahoma, Texas, Iowa, Indiana, and Ohio) have provided at least two state universities to meet the divergent needs of their citizens.

It is trite but important to point out that the people of Illinois spend considerably more for luxuries like tobacco, moving pictures, and soft drinks than for state universities and colleges. In spite of their elaborate system of highways, they still spend almost as much on roads as on higher education in state supported institutions.

Here is how Illinois ranks with neighboring states in expenditures per capita for publicly controlled institutions of higher learning:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Per Capita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>$3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>$3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>$2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>$1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>$1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>$1.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No wonder some of its most brilliant young people feel that they can do better in out-of-state institutions!

Is not this poor showing a direct result of ignoring the educational needs of the million people in the Southern third of the state? Can Illinois afford not to improve its whole educational system by doing a little to improve the most neglected part of it?