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 for the results, but also because higher education is facing one of its most grave situations in recent history - student loan debt, 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 less on their endowments, 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 warfare. 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. Conservatists have been calling for an over- sight 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 unequal 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 no details. Not only that, given that such a plan would require federal funding, where is the 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 as a way to 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 a devastating effect on the finances of many public colleges and universities.

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In a news release at the time, Edwardsville Police Chief Jay Kueven said a suspect approached the bank teller and demanded money. The suspect received about $500 and fled through the south doors. In Thursday’s news release, Boyce said Collier “approached the teller claiming he needed to make a withdrawal but handed the teller a note that demanded loose bills that were $20s and over, and said ‘no alarm.’” He fled through the south doors at the Main and Chestnut Streets and St. Peters banks were similar.

Retired teacher to visit Antarctica

By BRITTANY KEEPERMAN
The Northwestern

CRYSTAL LAKE, Ill. (AP) — Betty Trummel may be retired, but in a few months she will be off to Antarctica to participate in an elite science leadership expedition.

Trummel is a former Crystal Lake Elementary School District 47 teacher who got her start as a teaching assistant outside the 700-person village of Tampico in Whiteside County.

She has since made connections around the world as she completed various science expeditions and has recently been selected as one of 78 women worldwide to complete the Homeward Bound expedition, an Australian-based project founded by Fabian Dattner and Jess Melbourne Thomas.

“Hearing that the news came in, I was just in complete awe,” said Trummel.

It’s exciting,” Trummel said. “It means I will be around people with similar goals and interests, which is great because there is so much to learn from everyone. Even as a 60-year-old retired school teacher, I’m not done.”

The project aims to enhance the impact of women in science and elevate participants’ leadership skills.

Women in all different science fields will participate, including doctors, engineers, zoologists and educators. The expedition will set off Dec. 2 from Ushuaia in Argentina.

Trummel will be working on education outreach in schools, not just locally but nationally and internationally. “You can see myself using what I have learned to keep having an impact on education.”

A documentary about the project - “Leading Us Home” - is in production and will focus on program participants and other women in science such as Jane Goodall, a British anthropologist known for her work with chimpanzees.

“Now that I have had my college education, I think it allows me to spark a child’s interest, which is why I am applying to do outreach once I am down there,” Trummel said.

My role has always been a science communicator,” she said. “I wanted my classroom to be a reflection of the world, and that is the way I always taught. I want to get kids to realize there are great careers in science. It is about changing perception.”

Roos Powell, a professor at Minnesota State University, worked with Trummel on a previous Antarctic expedition through the ANDRILL Research Institute for Science Education Developers program, of which she was co-chief scientist.

Powell said the work Trummel has done is invaluable and necessary. “It is a challenge to explain scientific research in a way that is palatable and easily understandable, he said.

Research scientists like myself haven’t gone through the training in terms of being able to communicate and understand what level to pitch things at in terms of people being around the world,” he said. “We found it valuable to have people like Betty working as educators to help demystify the main concepts of what we are trying to do and explain the significance of the results.”

Guilty

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Kurt Ellsworth outside his office on Troy Road.

FAMILY

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Thus happy doing what he is doing, Ellsworth plans to hire another “producer” soon. Someone to explain premiums, explain coverage, and sell. “I really need another me,” he says. “Before too long, it’s going to be too much, and it’s heading in that direction now.” He also plans to expand from “personalized” coverage, such as homes and cars, to commercial coverage such as apartment complexes.

For now, the staff is comprised of Ellsworth and Administrative Assistant Stephanie Helps. The two had known each other for years but were skeptical about whether a business arrangement would work. But it has. She was hired over the summer.

“Trummel plans to try it out for 30 days,” Ellsworth says. “She’s been here ever since. And it’s worked out just fine. Maybe even better than I’d brought to them in simple terms.”

Zach Foor/Intelligencer

Kurt Ellsworth runs his own business, Ellsworth Insurance Agency. He specializes in auto, home, life, and commercial coverage.

It was in April.

Most of his business, he says, comes from walk-ins. People sometimes notice the new sign out front and stop in.

He enjoys selling insurance because “it fits a need for so many people.”

Everybody needs it. Not everyone likes the fact that they have to have it,” he says. Being an independent agent gives him and his clients more options to choose from in the way of insurance carriers. With more options, he says, “it’s a pick and choose outside the box, even outside the box.”

Ellsworth grew up in Edwardsville. He is married and has two children. And at the age of 48, he carries himself with the calm demeanor of his father. His job is both salesman and teacher.

He makes it a point to impress on clients, up front, what the limits to a particular policy are so they can choose what they really need. What is comprehensive coverage? How does it differ from collision? “It’s amazing how many people don’t know that,” he says. “It just has to be explained to them in simple terms.”
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 school orchestra, chorus, and band perform. The high school concert followed the middle school concert.