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## SIUC research: Shining light in dark times

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Our View: Despite much negative news, the research coming out of Southern Illinois University Carbondale is worth celebrating.

Some of the recent news surrounding Southern Illinois University Carbondale has had a decidedly negative tone. It's also been a trend of the last few years.

Enrollment is dropping. State funds aren't coming to state universities as quickly as they should, making SIUC and others scramble to fill budget gaps. Furlough days have been mandated for employees, much to the dismay of some faculty unions. Even the schools highest-profile sports teams, football and men's basketball, had disappointing seasons.

In Friday's issue of The Southern Illinoisan, it was reported that SIU President Glenn Poshard had asked for nearly a double-digit tuition increase, a massive increase which the Board of Trustees has fortunately asked to reconsider. And on the front page of Saturday's paper, even the largely positive and ceremonial installation of Chancellor Rita Cheng was met with union protests.

But there are bright lights shining through the darkness. Perhaps no area at SIUC has a brighter present or future than the field of research.

In last Sunday's issue of The Southern Illinoisan, we highlighted many of the research achievements happening at Southern Illinois' most well-known institution. It began with Codell Rodriguez's story about the funding coming in for research projects. Even without any federal stimulus funding, and even with the other funding issues happening at the university, researchers are on track to pull in more research grants and funds than they did in Fiscal Year 2010, when they brought in \$73 million. The story also mentioned this week's Research Town Meeting and Fair at the university, which celebrated much of the research happening at SIUC.

But nothing showcases the university's efforts more than the special section in last Sunday's paper, "Research - It Matters." A partnership between The Southern Illinoisan and SIUC created the full-color section. The print and visual content was the work of SIUC; the editorial production and printing was handled by The Southern.

In her opening column, Cheng mentioned some of the impressive stats about SIUC research. SIUC is one of only 139 public universities in the United States listed as a research institution, out of more than 1,700 public institutions in the nation. It is part of only 4 percent of doctoral-granting universities that the Carnegie Foundation also rates as a high-research activity institution.

And while those stats are impressive, it's the people behind them who are truly amazing. Just consider some of these examples:

λ A group of law students are assisting the Downstate Illinois Innocence Project, which helps prove the innocence of wrongfully convicted criminals.

λ Dale "Buck" Hales, a professor in the physiology department, is working to decrease the severity of ovarian cancer, which has the highest mortality rate of all cancers in the female reproductive system.

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λ Kristen Jordan, a senior in zoology, is showing the effects of global warming on crustaceans and other marine life.

λ The "Matrix of Hope" program was funded and started to assist methamphetamine abusers - and 97 percent of the addicts who completed the program were still clean six months later.

λ Martin Hebel, an associate professor, is doing research on a wireless infrared sensor that will help farmers better analyze crops.

λ Angela Aguayo, an assistant professor in cinema and photography, is working on a project to document Southern Illinois' civil rights history, a vital piece of our past.

Sometimes it's easy to forget that SIUC is more than the region's biggest employer, more than an economic engine, more than a creator of news stories, more than a collection of athletes we cheer. Its primary mission is to educate, to improve the lives of the young men and women who come through Carbondale and call SIUC home. There is question the primary mission is successful, and more worthy of attention than any single negative development.

In addition to meeting its mission, SIUC improves the lives of others throughout the world.

With the amount and quality of research being done in our backyard, SIUC is absolutely improving lives. And, as last week's special section said, that's what really matters.