



Alumni Society Board of Governors Meeting Minutes May 5, 2025

Members in Attendance:

Sofya Asfaw, MD, Rik Austin, MD, Austin Beason, MD, Erick Butt, MD, Elizabeth Montgomery-Collins, MD, Nicole Florence, MD, Jason Gillihan, MD, Diane Hillard-Sembell, MD, Breck Jones, MD, Gina Kovach, MD, Safiya McNeese-Ruffin, MD, Renee Mueller, MD, Amanda Mulch, MD, Michael Pick, MD, Ron Romanelli, MD, Thomas Selby, MD, David Skillrud, MD, Stephen Soltys, MD, Christine Todd, MD.

Members Absent:

Elizabeth Valencia, MD

Ex-Officio Members in Attendance:

Wendi El-Amin, MD, and Jerry Kruse, MD, MSPH.

Ex-Officio Members Absent:

Haneme Idrizi, MD, Cassie Mattson, CMP, and Patsy Wappel.

Medical Students and House Staff in Attendance:

Madison Stacey, Class of 2026, Riley Hochstein, Class of 2028, Jack Carnduff, LSP Class of 2027, and Matt Weber, MD, Resident.

Medical Students Absent:

Molly Smith, Class of 2025, and Tola Adeyefa, Class of 2027.

Staff in Attendance:

Nicole Edmiston, Kate Moore, MS, and Millicent Emma Fenyi.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

Board President Dr. Rik Austin called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. He welcomed attendees and noted with regret the absence of Cassie Mattson and Patsy Wappel. Their respective reports would be presented by Dr. Rik Austin. Dr. Austin expressed gratitude to all Board members, faculty, students, and alumni for their ongoing support and engagement with the SIU School of Medicine.

Introduction of New Board Members

Dr. Erik Butt and Dr. Gina Kovach were formally introduced as new members of the Board of Governors.

- ▶ **Erik Butt, MD** is a 2018 graduate of SIU School of Medicine and a practicing radiologist in the Carbondale region. He recently completed his fellowship and shared a strong desire to give back to the institution that significantly impacted his family. His wife is also an SIU graduate from a master's program.
- ▶ **Gina Kovach, MD**, a distinguished member of the Charter Class of 1976, has a career spanning internal and emergency medicine. Since her retirement in 2016, she has

remained actively engaged with the medical and broader community through roles at SIU, the Illinois State Board, Lincoln Land Community College, and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

Board members extended a warm welcome to both Dr. Erik Butt and Dr. Gina Kovach, acknowledging their longstanding commitment to SIU and their enthusiasm for supporting medical education.

2. APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 21, 2024 MEETING MINUTES

Dr. Rik Austin first moved the motion to approve the last meeting's minutes and it was seconded. The motion passed unanimously without revisions.

3. OFFICE OF THE DEAN & PROVOST

Dr. Kruse provided a comprehensive update on recent institutional achievements, academic performance, research advancements, and ongoing strategic initiatives. He expressed appreciation to the Board of Governors for their continued support and highlighted several major institutional developments.

R1 Research Designation:

- SIU, including the School of Medicine, has officially attained R1 research university status.
- SIU Medicine awarded over 100 research doctorates (SIU total: 102) and exceeded \$50 million in research expenditures (SIU total: \$58M).
- The School of Medicine contributed \$25.6 million, accounting for 44% of total research expenditures.

Academic and Research Growth:

- A 300%+ increase in student and resident research publications and presentations over the past decade.
- Establishment of an umbrella graduate education program to streamline academic offerings.
- The Center for Clinical Research is currently generating 40% more in clinical research funding than the University of Missouri-Columbia.
- Dr. John Flack continues to lead Population Science and Policy initiatives with a strong emphasis on integrative public health research.

Match Day and Residency Recruitment:

- 72 students matched successfully, with 27% entering SIU residency programs.
- All Springfield-based programs filled during the first round of matches.
- 105 new residents and 17 fellows are expected to begin in the coming academic year.
- A total of 167 diplomas were conferred to graduating residents and fellows.

▶ **Institutional Metrics:**

- To date, SIU School of Medicine has graduated 6,632 physicians (approximately 6,000 unique alumni).
- Of these, 40% remain in Illinois, and more than 50% practice within the School's designated service region.
- Current enrollment and staffing figures:
 - 320 medical students per class
 - 412 residents and fellows
 - 140 physician assistant students
 - 350 physician faculty
 - 475 full-time faculty members
 - 1,700 staff members

▶ **Central Illinois Kidney & Dialysis Associates, S.C. has joined SIU.**

▶ **Clinical and Financial Performance between FY2019 and FY2023:**

- Clinical productivity increased by 49%.
- Clinical income rose by 37% in the same period.
- Physician faculty increased by 21%.
- Resident physicians increased by 19%.
- Operating reserves are in the top 40% compared to other medical schools.

▶ **Dr. Kruse reported on growth in the number of learners at SIU School of Medicine between FY2019 and FY2023, reflecting the school's commitment to advancing talent and innovation:**

- Physician assistant student enrollment increased by 70% (an increase of 60 students).
- The number of resident physicians and fellows increased by 19% (an increase of 68 trainees).
- Medical student enrollment increased by 11% (an increase of 32 students).

▶ **Economic and Workforce Impact:**

- A recent economic analysis confirmed:
 - One SIU-trained physician supports 17 jobs, \$3.4 million in economic output, \$1.24 million in salaries, and \$1.2 million in state/local tax revenue.
 - A single graduating class supports 782 jobs, \$147 million in economic activity, and \$48 million in statewide salaries.

▶ **Capital Projects and Facilities:**

- Recent acquisitions:
 - ENT Building (720 N Bond Street)
 - Former Walgreens (5th and South Grand)
 - Center for Family Medicine (820 N Fourth Street)
 - Former Illinois Lottery Building (201 E. Madison Street)
- Upcoming developments:

- Neuroscience Instructional Facility
- New Medical Education Building (currently in the design phase)

Recent facility acquisitions were noted as strategic efforts to expand the SIU SOM campus footprint and support anticipated growth in medical education and healthcare services.

4. OFFICE OF EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

▶ Dr. El-Amin provided an overview of ongoing programs and initiatives within the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Key programmatic highlights included:

- Continued growth of student affinity groups, including APAMSA and SNMA.
- Expansion of the McNeese Physician Preparatory Pathway, which now serves 156 high school students.
- Ongoing collaboration with Memorial and St. John's Medical Centers to host quarterly community forums focused on issues such as homelessness, chronic illness, mental health, and substance use.

▶ Student Pathways:

- Dr. El-Amin reported that the Health Equity Scholars Pathway has reached its largest cohort to date, with 78 students enrolled.
- She also noted the continued development and participation in additional pathways, including Medical Education, Humanities, and Leadership.

▶ Alumni and Student Engagement:

Dr. El-Amin reported on several initiatives aimed at enhancing alumni and student engagement:

- The launch of the MEDPREP Alumni Association.
- SNMA students initiated the "Health DEPOTS" program.
- The introduction of the LAYAB Room, a designated wellness and reflection space for students.

5. OFFICE OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

▶ Admissions and Match Highlights

- Over 1,200 medical school applications were received.
- 185 candidates were interviewed.
- 80 students are expected to matriculate.
- The Lincoln Scholars Program will welcome 8 students in May, with the remaining cohort arriving in August.

- Virtual Q&A sessions and Admitted Student Day events have been implemented to enhance engagement.

Match Outcomes

- A total of 72 students matched.
- 27% matched into SIU programs.
- 42% matched to residency programs within Illinois.

Continued emphasis on student wellness, mental health support, and academic resources were made.

6. OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT

Patsy Wappel was not in attendance to present the report.

7. OFFICE OF ALUMNI RELATIONS

Presented by Dr. Rik Austin on behalf of Cassie Mattson, CMP

Alumni Dinner Host Guidelines

Following incidents at recent alumni dinners that made some students uncomfortable, the Board discussed implementing general guidelines for dinner hosts.

- Concerns centered around sensitive or controversial topics raised during these dinners. While recognizing the value of open dialogue, the Board emphasized the need for neutral and respectful conversation, especially in light of the power dynamics at play.
- There was broad consensus that instead of a rigid policy, hosts should be provided with a set of expectations or guiding principles. These would emphasize fostering a welcoming environment and avoiding contentious topics at initial meetings. Suggestions included a short, general statement included in invitation materials and encouraging feedback collection from student attendees.
- The board also discussed whether guidelines should be framed as a formal agreement or simply provided as reference. Members expressed that while most hosts are thoughtful and considerate, offering clear expectations supports consistency and student comfort.
- The Board also supported continuing feedback mechanisms to help identify and address issues should they arise. Feedback would ideally remain anonymous to reduce students' concerns about potential retribution and to promote honest responses.

Diversity of Alumni Dinner Hosts

The Board expressed strong support for targeted outreach to increase minority representation among alumni dinner hosts.

- Dr. Rik Austin noted that while there is existing diversity among hosts, current student feedback indicates a desire for more representative engagement.
- Dr. Rik Austin, speaking on behalf of Cassie Mattson who was not present at the meeting, conveyed her proposal to collaborate with the Student National Medical Association (SNMA) to enhance alumni engagement among individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- Dr. Nicole Florence observed a shift in student demographics and emphasized lowering logistical barriers for alumni to host.
- Dr. Wendy El-Amin cited successful mentoring relationships with diverse students who matched into competitive programs, and offered to continue hosting as a result.

Distinguished Alumni Award Nominee Vetting

The Board endorsed a proposal to incorporate public records screenings into the Distinguished Alumni Award vetting process.

- Dr. Rik Austin explained the rationale following a recent concern regarding nominee background discrepancies. He clarified that the SIU Foundation has the capability to conduct reputational risk assessments, which include review of public records, alignment with School of Medicine values, and verification of professional claims.
- The Board agreed that this process should not only apply to award nominees, but also to candidates for the Board of Governors. Members noted that while this is not a criminal background check, it provides important context to the selection committee.
- There was additional discussion about clarifying the criteria for each award, including the Early Career Award, which is currently limited to individuals within 15 years of graduation. The Board expressed interest in gathering information on award vetting practices from other medical schools for comparison.

Destination Reunion Pilot Program

Board members reviewed the structure and feedback from the new Destination Reunion pilot program. Reunions were held in multiple locations including Springfield, St. Louis, Chicago, Seattle, South Carolina, and New York, with strong alumni engagement and participation.

- Dr. Soltys, who attended a recent event, shared that the format allowed for deeper engagement and meaningful conversation around alumni involvement and giving. Feedback indicated the pilot format fostered stronger connections than traditional on-campus reunions.
- The Board acknowledged the effort and success of the Alumni Office, especially the planning work led by Nicole Edmiston, and expressed appreciation for the ongoing coordination. Future events will be monitored to determine whether this model should be adopted more broadly.

Student Interest Group Liaison Initiative

A new proposal was introduced to designate an Alumni Relations Liaison within each student interest group. These liaisons would coordinate with the Alumni Office, enabling stronger connections and engagement with students, especially during the third year, when contact traditionally wanes.

Board members supported the idea, noting it would provide consistent touchpoints throughout all four years of medical school and require no additional funding, only logistical coordination.

Young Alumni Giving Campaign

A proposed campaign to encourage donations from recent graduates was presented, with a focus on supporting YMCA memberships for current students. The initiative aims to build a culture of giving through small, meaningful contributions, such as \$5–\$10 per month.

- Board members voiced a wide range of opinions. Some praised the tangible impact of this initiative, citing its appeal and resonance with alumni who had benefited from the YMCA membership themselves. Others expressed concern that soliciting donations from residents - who are often under significant financial pressure - could backfire and create negative associations with giving.
- The discussion highlighted the importance of flexible messaging and donation tiers, suggesting that communication should emphasize that all contributions, no matter how small, are valued. Alternatives to monetary donations, such as volunteering or sending messages of encouragement, were also encouraged.
- Board members also discussed timing and audience, with some advocating outreach during early career stages rather than residency. Ideas such as leveraging class leaders, using personal testimonials, and exploring alternative donation targets (e.g., travel funds or emergency support) were raised.

The Board agreed that this initiative should be reconsidered and refined before proceeding.

Alumni Engagement Committee Name Change

The Board considered renaming the Wellness Committee to better reflect its evolving role in alumni engagement. The committee's activities have grown beyond wellness to include event planning, alumni outreach, and other engagement efforts.

The name change would better align with its function and could help increase participation. The change will require an update to the bylaws, to be addressed in the next meeting. The Board expressed general support for this revision.

8. MEDICAL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Students Reports:

Class of 2028 Representative - Riley Hochstein:

- Over 240 hours of community service completed
- Successful student wellness events: pajama days, craft nights, pickleball tournament
- Established new student Instagram platform for outreach and communication

📌 **Lincoln Scholars Representative - Jack Carnduff (Class of 2027):**

- Reported successful matches across various specialties.
- Students are progressing through clinical rotations and engaging with the Professional Enrichment Program (PEP)

📌 **Class of 2026 Representative – Madison Stacey:**

- Students are focused on residency applications, USMLE Step 2 preparation, and securing away rotations through the Host Program

📌 **Class of 2025 Representative - Molly Smith (not present):**

- Sent appreciation to the Board and acknowledged how much she enjoyed her time spent over the last several years.

9. HOUSE STAFF REPRESENTATIVE

Presented by Dr. Matthew Weber, PGY-6

- 📌 Dr. Weber provided an update focused on resident leadership development, adherence to work-hour regulations, and continued efforts to support resident wellness. Enhancements have been made to internal reporting systems, and peer support mechanisms have been strengthened to better address trainee concerns.
- 📌 The Resident Resource Fund has increased by 50%, allowing for greater support of conference travel. Fundraising efforts are ongoing to ensure the sustainability and further growth of this resource.
- 📌 Greater resident participation in leadership roles is being encouraged across programs and institutional initiatives. Dr. Weber noted that this engagement is key to fostering professional development and amplifying resident perspectives in decision-making processes.
- 📌 The most recent annual survey was conducted, with feedback highlighting improvements as well as ongoing challenges related to logging system functionality. These concerns are currently under review.
- 📌 Finally, Dr. Weber reported that resident wellness and safety remain top priorities, particularly in light of changes within the HSHS health system. Program leadership is monitoring developments closely and continuing to advocate for clear communication and support for trainees.

Dr. Rik Austin expressed appreciation to Dr. Matthew Weber for his leadership and contributions.

10. STUDENT RESOURCE FUND UPDATE

- ▶ Dr. Jason Gillihan provided an update on the Student Resource Fund, noting that certain student resources remain underutilized and emphasizing the need for improved optimization. He reported on the current status of the fund.
- ▶ Dr. Gillihan called for a motion to approve the allocation of funds. The motion was moved and seconded. No objections were raised, and the motion carried.

11. RECOGNITIONS

- ▶ Dr. Austin Beason was promoted to the role of Graduate/Professional Young Trustee at Duke University.
- ▶ Dr. Rik Austin was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure, effective 2025, at SIU SOM.

12. OTHER BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Dr. Rik Austin at 8:24 P.M., with appreciation extended to all members for their dedication and ongoing contributions to SIU School of Medicine.