

Jobs Program with Interesting History Gets the Ax

Written by Rich Miller
Tuesday, 15 July 2003 18:00

- [Buy OEM Autodesk Alias Surface 2014 MAC](#)
- [Download Microsoft Windows 8.1 Enterprise \(32-bit\)](#)
- [Buy Cheap Adobe Photoshop CC Student And Teacher Edition \(Full LifeTime license\)](#)
- [Buy Telestream ScreenFlow 3 MAC \(en\)](#)
- [Discount - I.R.I.S. Readiris 12 Corporate](#)
- [9.95\\$ Lynda.com - HTML5: Messaging And Communications In Depth cheap oem](#)
- [Discount - Lynda.com - Photoshop for Web Design](#)
- [359.95\\$ GraphiSoft ArchiCAD 13 MAC cheap oem](#)
- [Buy OEM Artlantis Studio 5 \(32 bit\)](#)
- [59.95\\$ Microsoft Publisher 2013 cheap oem](#)
- [Buy Cheap Microsoft Visio Professional 2013](#)

A \$6-million annual state program to help at-risk high-school students graduate and find jobs has been vetoed out of existence by Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich. The program appears to be worthwhile, and the governor has never really explained why he wanted to kill it, other than he wants to “streamline” and “consolidate” the state’s job-training efforts.

Whatever the reason, the program has a fascinating bit of historical intrigue behind it, and I figured now was a good time to tell you about it.

Jobs for Illinois Graduates (JILG) was established by Southern Illinois University in 1996 as part of a national effort to improve the lot of students from impoverished backgrounds.

The JILG program has had a decent success rate, but things got weird last year when Hazel Loucks, who was then-Governor George Ryan’s deputy governor for education, demanded that SIU hand out fat raises to every member of JILG staff.

Loucks insisted that Michelle Trueblood, the program’s director, be given a 41-percent pay hike, from \$5,333 per month to \$7,500 per month. (That’s \$90,000 a year, for those with mathematics difficulties.)

Chad Trueblood, a “Researcher II” staffer, was to receive a 49-percent pay hike, to \$4,750 per month. The three other JILG staff members were slated for raises of between 20 and 29 percent.

According to internal university communications and documents I obtained through back-channel sources, SIU administrators resisted Loucks’ demands.

Director Trueblood, who had only a master’s degree and was working on a Ph.D., would be making \$2,500 a month more than an associate professor with a doctorate in the university’s Department of Workforce Education & Development. She’d also be making just a few hundred bucks less than the average full professor in that department who might have as much as 30 years of seniority, and she’d be hauling in a few hundred dollars more a month than the average department chair at SIU.

Jobs Program with Interesting History Gets the Ax

Written by Rich Miller

Tuesday, 15 July 2003 18:00

At the time, SIU was facing yet another round of state budget cuts and the “current campus climate” surrounding those cuts made increasing the JILG salaries a bad idea, according to an April 16, 2002, memo prepared by the dean of SIU’s College of Education & Human Services for the university chancellor. The dean recommended that the raises be denied.

On April 17, SIU Chancellor Walter Wendler sent a letter to Loucks informing her that he had decided against granting the pay raises. “At this time, I am in the position of having to make some very tough budget decisions,” Wendler wrote. “I cannot justify giving the [JILG pay] increases.” Wendler also claimed he made his decision based on “what I believe to be the highest and best interests of the university.”

Three months later, SIU was informed by the Illinois State Board of Education that the JILG program had been moved to John A. Logan Community College, just down the road from the university’s Carbondale campus. The decision was made, according to the letter, after a “recent review” of the program. Logan Community College, the board informed Chancellor Wendler, is “an institution that more closely aligns to the program’s fiscal and programmatic initiatives.”

A month after SIU received its “Dear John” letter, SIU President John Walker sent an e-mail to numerous higher-ups in the university claiming that his “preliminary investigation” had found that Loucks “was the primary person responsible for getting the [JILG] grant moved.”

Walker claimed in the e-mail that one of Governor Ryan’s top people, Kevin Wright, had told him that Loucks “acted alone” and without the knowledge of the governor. Walker subsequently sent a letter to the State Board of Education claiming that the move to Logan was “based solely on the university’s refusal to provide JILG staff with the sizable salary increase they requested.”

And, wouldn’t you know it, a Freedom of Information Act request filed with John A. Logan College not long ago revealed that JILG staff got their raises after the program was moved from SIU.

I hope they saved some of that extra dough, because they’re out of work now.

Rich Miller also publishes Capitol Fax, a daily political newsletter. He can be reached at (<http://www.capitolfax.com>).