Written by Katelyn Tye Thursday, 11 August 2011 23:53

Former Treasurer to Advance Higher Education in Illinois

CHICAGO - August 10, 2011. Governor Pat Quinn today appointed Alexi Giannoulias to serve as chairman of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) as it works to increase graduation rates at the state's community colleges and advance Illinois' competitive edge in the global economy. Giannoulias will lead the non-paid, voluntary 11-member board, which governs the state's 48 community colleges – the third-largest system in the country.

"For Illinois to continue to grow jobs and advance our economic competitiveness, we must prepare our students for the jobs available in a 21st century economy," Governor Quinn said. "As a former State Treasurer with a longtime passion for education reform, Alexi is the right leader to shepherd our community college system towards higher graduation rates and better job placement in Illinois."

Under Governor Quinn's leadership, Giannoulias will focus on increasing graduation rates to achieve the state's "60 by 25" goal, which calls for 60 percent of Illinois' adult population to hold a college degree or career certificate by 2025, up from about 40 percent today. Giannoulias will also develop success standards in terms of degrees awarded and job placement; seek to better prepare high school students who enroll in community colleges for college-level work; increase access to community colleges for low-income and rural residents; and boost the number of credits that can transfer from community college to public universities.

"Community colleges play a vital role in creating the workforce of the 21st century by providing economical, flexible and effective training degrees," Giannoulias said. "Since putting Americans back to work is the single greatest challenge facing our country, a well-trained, well-educated workforce is absolutely crucial to America's future. To ensure that every young adult has the tools for gainful employment, our community college system must help students graduate with a meaningful degree that will enable them to find a job."

Giannoulias' appointment was met with praise from U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan and the Governor's point person on education, Lt. Governor Sheila Simon.

Governor Quinn Taps Alexi Giannoulias to Lead Illinois' Community Colleges

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"I want to commend Governor Quinn for choosing Alexi Giannoulias for this critically important job," Duncan said. "Alexi is a passionate believer in public education and I'm confident that his leadership will help the community colleges of Illinois do a better job of preparing young people to compete in the global economy."

"I look forward to working with Chairman Giannoulias to help more students complete college and find good-paying jobs in Illinois," Lt. Governor Simon said.

Giannoulias served as Illinois Treasurer from 2007 to 2011. He focused on job creation by promoting programs that help small business owners have access to capital, and by working with citizens to promote investments in communities. Giannoulias graduated cum laude from Boston University with a degree in economics and earned a law degree from Tulane University's School of Law. Beginning this September, he will teach a political science course at Northwestern University in Evanston as an adjunct professor.

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