

# National Conference Comes to UIS

## **LINKS** Prepares Public Universities and State Capitals for the Next Century

The University of Illinois was selected to host the fifth annual LINKS Conference, a national conference focusing on public policy and held in a state capital each year. This year's conference, titled "The Links Between Public Universities and State Capitals: Preparing for the 21st Century," was designed to bring together academics, state agency officials, policy specialists, and elected policymakers to anticipate changing social needs in the 21st century and to develop creative responses to those needs through stronger linkages between public universities and state governments.



Springfield Mayor Karen Hasara.

The Illinois LINKS Conference, organized and coordinated by the Institute for Public Affairs (IPA), set a number of precedents. It was the largest of the five LINKS conferences, drawing more practitioners and academics than ever before. It offered more panels and roundtables and dealt with topics relating to all three branches of government. In addition, it established the first annual LINKS

Conference Award to recognize an exemplary model of public university and state government partnership.

Over 250 participants representing 30 different states attended the conference over the four-day period, May 1-4. The conference opened with a reception and program at the historic Old State Capitol in Springfield. "Abe Lincoln" and the Sangamon Woodwind Consort welcomed participants on their arrival. The opening program

featured remarks by Susan Gravenhorst, Chair of the University of Illinois Board of Trustees, University President James Stukel, Springfield Mayor Karen Hasara, and State Representative Gary Hannig.



Socializing between sessions.

The conference boasted four nationally recognized keynote speakers. John Byrne, executive director of the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, spoke on "The Implications of the Kellogg Commission's Work for Linkages Between Public Universities and State Capitals." Martin Marty, Professor in the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, spoke on "Getting Engaged Civically and Civilly: New Urgencies for Universities and State Governments." Larry Smarr, director of the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the Urbana campus, addressed the topic, "Toward a Digital Nation," and Peter Harkness, editor and publisher of *Governing* magazine, gave a presentation titled "Roles for States and Universities in this Era of Devolution: The Media Perspective."

The conference sessions included two plenary panels and 26 breakout sessions. The first

plenary panel, "Breaking New Ground: Models that Foster Change in University and State Government Relations," included presenters from Maine, Maryland, Missouri, and Florida. The second plenary panel dealt with "The Use of Cyber Technology in Serving the State" and featured programs in Colorado and Illinois.

The breakout sessions were organized according to five themes:

1. Transforming university and state government relations in an era of scarcity, devolution, political incivility, and civic disengagement;
2. Specifying roles for universities in enhancing the capacity of state government for social and political change in the delivery of public service;
3. Identifying innovative models of university and state government collaboration in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches;
4. Employing the new technologies in linkages between universities and state government; and
5. Developing the ability of university-based institutes and centers to respond to the changing needs of state government.



UIS Chancellor Naomi Lynn, "Abe Lincoln," University of Illinois Board of Trustees Chair Susan Gravenhorst, and University President James J. Stukel.

During conference breaks participants were treated to Springfield attractions: a tour of the "new" State Capitol Building was arranged for Friday, May 2, and, on Saturday, May 3, participants could tour either the Lincoln Home or the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Dana Thomas House.

In addition to the IPA, the conference was cohosted by the University of Illinois' Institute of Government and Public Affairs (IGPA), the Great Cities Institute of the University of Illinois at Chicago, and the Chancellor's Office of the Urbana campus. Supporting organizations that provided funds or in-kind contributions included: the Central Illinois Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, the Center for Governmental Studies at Northern Illinois University, the Council of Governors' Policy Advisors, the Council of State Governments, Illinois Women in Government, and the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Nancy Ford, IPA executive director, cochaired the national program committee with Bob Rich, IGPA director. Barbara Ferrara, associate director of the IPA, was the conference coordinator, and Brenda Suhling, secretary in the IPA Central Office, served as conference secretary. Jack Van Der Slik, the institute's Illinois Legislative Studies Center director, served on the Illinois planning committee, as did Glen Hahn Cope, Dean of the School of Public Affairs and Administration.

Audio and video cassette tapes of selected LINKS sessions are available, with the edited proceedings of the conference scheduled to be released in the fall of 1997. Contact the IPA central office for more information.



Keynote speaker Martin Marty.



Keynote speaker John Byrne.