

## Southern Illinois University President Accused of Plagiarism

*By Surajit Sen Sharma*

Southern Illinois University President Glenn Poshard, a former Democratic candidate for governor and a former Congressional representative, has been accused of including rampant plagiarism in his doctoral dissertation published in 1984. The *Daily Egyptian*, SIU's student newspaper, first reported that Poshard had lifted sections from at least 19 works by 22 authors without citation or attribution and placed them in his dissertation.

Comparison documents presented by the *Daily Egyptian* show that in most cases quotes from the works were lifted verbatim, while in some there were sloppy attempts at rewriting. When confronted with the documents, Poshard replied to the *Daily Egyptian*, "Unless I just failed to cite it...what else can I say?" However, Poshard added that at that point in his life he was running for the Illinois State Senate as well as trying to get his dissertation finished. In fact, Poshard joined the Illinois State Senate in 1984 just two weeks after submitting his doctoral dissertation.

In a new turn of events, Poshard has sent the dissertation for review to the SIU department from which he originally gained his doctorate to determine what changes he should make. He reportedly stated, "I will make whatever changes are recommended by the department, and by doing so, I hope to fulfill the highest expectations you have of me as your president." Some questions that have been raised by the incident include:

- Can plagiarism in a submitted dissertation be rectified after a degree has been granted?
- Does the discovery of plagiarism render the degree void?
- Are there different academic standards for people like Poshard and the rest of the student community?
- Can increased workload taken on in pursuit of personal ambitions be considered a circumstance that is sufficiently mitigating to justify plagiarism?
- Poshard would never have become president of SIU without his doctorate. What will happen to him if his doctorate becomes void?
- Would Poshard still have received his doctorate if the proper quotations and citations had been in place?

Poshard's case will be very interesting to follow because it involves several issues inherent to the submission of dissertations, how plagiarism affects academia, and the social consequences of discoveries of plagiarism. It is a case in which what is fair seems unjust and what is just seems unfair.