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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois Senate wish to congratulate Dr. Jonah Rice on his retirement after dedicating three decades of his life to the field of higher education and leaving an indelible mark on Southeastern Illinois College (SIC); and

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WHEREAS, Dr. Rice began his journey in 1990 as a junior faculty member, and his commitment to SIC has been steadfast; he played a pivotal role in establishing the college's theatre program and coached multiple national championship speech and debate teams; over the years, he progressed through various roles, serving as chair for the Humanities Division and eventually assuming the mantle of interim president in 2009; and

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WHEREAS, Dr. Rice is a true product of SIC and Southern Illinois; his educational journey began after graduating from Carrier Mills High School; he earned an Associate of Arts from SIC before furthering his studies at Bradley University, Central Michigan University, and Regent University, culminating in a Ph.D.; and

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WHEREAS, Dr. Rice's influence extended beyond the classroom as a distinguished coach for the nationally renowned

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1 SIC Forensic Falcons speech program; he also played a crucial  
2 role in steering the college through successful  
3 reaccreditations with the Higher Learning Commission, further  
4 solidifying SIC's reputation for academic excellence; and

5 WHEREAS, Dr. Rice's leadership and advocacy garnered  
6 widespread recognition throughout his tenure; he served as  
7 president of the Illinois Community College Presidents Council  
8 and received accolades such as the Advocacy Award from the  
9 Illinois Community College Trustees Association; and

10 WHEREAS, Dr. Rice's steadfast guidance ensured SIC's  
11 resilience and continued growth despite facing numerous  
12 challenges, including the 2012 Leap Day Tornado, the historic  
13 budget impasse of 2016-2017, the dropping district population,  
14 losses in the local economy, and a pandemic; his strategic  
15 vision, coupled with his ability to forge meaningful  
16 partnerships, resulted in transformative initiatives,  
17 including the establishment of the Ella Elizabeth Hise Museum  
18 of Regional Art on the Harrisburg campus and a new Stanford D.  
19 Williams Career and Training Center in Carmi; and

20 WHEREAS, Dr. Rice also spearheaded the establishment of  
21 several innovative programs that have enriched the academic  
22 landscape of SIC, including biofuels, outdoor recreation,  
23 outfitter wildlife management, and powersports technology;

1 additionally, he played a pivotal role in the development of  
2 new campus teams, including bowling, archery, and esports,  
3 catering to diverse student interests; and

4 WHEREAS, Dr. Rice's impact at SIC is defined by his  
5 resolute dedication to the institution's mission and his  
6 profound impact on countless students, faculty, and staff; as  
7 he embarks on a new chapter, he leaves behind a legacy of  
8 servant leadership, resilience, and unwavering commitment to  
9 educational excellence; and

10 WHEREAS, Dr. Rice cherishes time with his wife, Megin, and  
11 their three adult children; he looks forward to pursuing  
12 personal interests, including writing, woodworking, cabin  
13 rental, consulting, and possibly even venturing into politics,  
14 all while cherishing the memories and lessons learned during  
15 his tenure at Southeastern Illinois College; therefore, be it

16 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL  
17 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we congratulate Dr.  
18 Jonah Rice on his retirement after dedicating three decades of  
19 his life to the field of higher education and leaving an  
20 indelible mark on Southeastern Illinois College; and be it  
21 further

22 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be

1 presented to Dr. Rice as a symbol of our respect and esteem.