

## Quinn: Quad-Cities should have full-fledged WIU campus

Originally Posted Online: March 26, 2009, 7:54 pm

Last Updated: March 26, 2009, 11:56 pm

[Comment on this story](#) | [Print this story](#) | [Email this story](#)

By **Pete Nickeas**, [Sng3@springnet1.com](mailto:Sng3@springnet1.com)

SPRINGFIELD -- A full-fledged Western Illinois University campus is essential for the Quad-Cities' economic development, Gov. Pat Quinn said Thursday.

"Having a four-year university, a public university in the Quad-Cities, is one of my top priorities for the whole state," Quinn said.

University officials and area lawmakers have tried to launch the riverfront campus since 2003. But the \$70 million project has been hampered by a lack of state funding. Although WIU's plans call for a three-building campus, the \$15.8 million included in Quinn's budget proposal last week would go towards renovating an existing building.

Quinn's support of a full-fledged WIU campus here came as he welcomed Moline to the Illinois Main Street program, a statewide network of communities trying to revitalize downtown areas.

The induction couldn't come at a better time. Unemployment in the Quad-Cities nearly reached 7

percent in January after sitting at 4.7 percent just a year ago, according to the most recent U.S. Department of Labor statistics. The local rate is the highest it's been since January 1993.

During a ceremony in the Capitol Rotunda, Quinn welcomed Moline and four other communities to the program.

"It's so inspiring to see all the color and ideas and enthusiasm of our main street volunteers, people from every part of Illinois," Quinn said. "It really is a great movement. The heart of America is the heart of the volunteer."

Quinn made the Main Street program, an early 1990's initiative of the Rural Affairs Council, a centerpiece of his tenure as lieutenant governor. The program promotes historic preservation and downtown revitalization and is a part of a national network.

Moline enters on the second level of the four-tiered economic development program. That will provide access to training and services for local Main Street organizers to prepare for meeting national standards.

Aledo and five other communities are "Main Street Premier Communities" that serve as models for other towns. Begun with nine communities, Illinois Main Street now includes 74 towns and

neighborhoods.

State Rep. Mike Boland congratulated local residents on the designation, saying the program was essential for Illinois' Economic Revival.

"It involves people of all types to build their communities, beautify their communities, restore their historic significance of their communities, and spur economic development," Boland said.

Pam Owens, executive director of the Moline Centre Main Street -- along with Moline Preservation Committee chairwoman Barbara Sandberg, her husband Dick Sandberg, treasurer for the Moline Preservation Society, and Moline Ald. Michael Carton, 2nd Ward -- accepted a plaque commemorating Moline's induction into the program.

Owens directed the Orion Main Street program for four years before heading Moline's effort to join the program. The application process took about a year-and-a-half, she said.

"We were lucky Moline already had a downtown organization, Moline Centre Partners, so that made the

application process easier," she said.

The biggest advantage to participating in the program is networking with other communities, Barbara Sandberg said.

"Main Street helps us avoid mistakes," she said. The people who've already been there and done that will be able to help us move forward and not waste our time or our money in the process."

Fundraising plans, guest speakers, architectural design work and training are all easier to access for Main Street programs, Owens said.

"Instead of 70 communities doing the research individually, Illinois' Main Street will give us the information and save us the time to do it," Owens said.