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BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPROVES CONTRACT EXTENSION FOR JOSH WHITMAN

CHICAGO - The University of Illinois Board of Trustees earlier today (Nov. 14, 2019) approved a contract extension for UI Director of Athletics Josh Whitman that will extend to June 30, 2024.

Whitman was hired in March 2016 and has led the Fighting Illini program to several significant milestones during his first three and one-half years at the helm. Highlights include:

- 13 Illinois teams finishing in the Top 16 nationally, with five finishing in the nation's top four.
- Illinois student-athletes consistently recording overall GPA above 3.10 and approximately 60 percent of Fighting Illini student-athletes earning a GPA of 3.00 or better. In the spring 2019 semester, 14 of the athletic department's 19 teams posted GPAs above 3.00. In the most recent cohort, Illinois student-athletes set a school record with a Student-Athlete Graduation Success Rate (GSR) of 92 percent.
- The hiring of head football coach Lovie Smith, who has built the program to bowl eligibility in 2019, including the biggest upset in program history (24-23 over then-No. 6 Wisconsin) and the biggest comeback win (25 points) in program history (37-34 over Michigan State). The football team is bowl eligible for the first time since 2014.
- The hiring of Brad Underwood as head coach of the Fighting Illini men's basketball program, which was universally praised.
- Hiring Chris Tamas to lead the Illinois volleyball program, Evan Clark as women's tennis coach, and negotiating long-term contract extensions with successful Illinois head coaches Mike Small (men's golf), Brad Dancer (men's tennis), Dan Hartleb (baseball), Jim Heffernan (wrestling), Tyra Perry (softball), Janet Rayfield (soccer) and Justin Spring (men's gymnastics).
- Spearheading an aggressive facilities agenda, including the completion of the Henry Dale and Betty Smith Football Center that opened in August 2019 at a cost of \$80 million. Other projects currently underway include Demirjian Park, the new \$27 million home of Fighting Illini soccer and men's and women's track and field, the Susan and Clint Atkins Baseball Training Center and plans for the expansion and renovation of the Ubben Basketball Practice Facility.
- DIA receiving more than 20 gifts of \$1 million or more, including a \$20-million gift from Chris and Dale Smith, the largest gift in UI athletics history.
- Creation of the Illinois Athletics Hall of Fame in 2017 to recognize the outstanding Fighting Illini Athletics legacy established over the last 130 years.
- Founding of the DIA's Diversity and Inclusivity Committee, which has spearheaded various initiatives, several in conjunction with Illinois events.