

# Toyota Responds To Associated Press Article Regarding Southern Illinois University

July 15, 2010

Toyota would like to set the record straight regarding a July 10 article by Jim Suhr of *The Associated Press* that grossly mischaracterized our relationship with Southern Illinois University and Professor David Gilbert. Toyota does not deny that it questions Professor Gilbert's findings because we stand by the safety of our vehicles. But to imply that our support of Southern Illinois University has changed as a result of his research or public statements is simply wrong. In fact, Toyota has enjoyed a relationship with SIU that began in the mid 1980's when we launched an on-campus recruiting program that continues to this day. Over the years we have expanded our relationship through financial and in-kind donations including:

- Grants totaling approximately \$200K, including \$100K in support of the University's Transportation Education Center.
- Donations of vehicles and vehicle parts.
- Annual scholarship programs (beginning in 2007) of between \$6,000-\$8,000 to deserving students.

The article incorrectly implies that Toyota took a number of steps to "pressure" Professor Gilbert and the University, including advisory committee resignations and a withdrawal of two internships. In reality, the resignations were intended to avoid any appearance of undue influence over Professor Gilbert's Congressional testimony. As for the internships, they were reduced not just at SIU but at many universities due to the challenging economy. Finally, the article cites a letter from an SIU alum and Toyota employee that was critical of the University and Professor Gilbert. What Mr. Suhr does not mention is that the correspondence was sent from the employee's personal email, and in no way represents Toyota's position on the matter.

A diversity of opinions and debate is at the heart of the Toyota Way and our focus on continuous improvement. While we may strongly disagree with Professor Gilbert's research, our relationship with SIU remains strong and we remain open to continuing our work together in the future.