

## FALL CONVOCATION 2005

As we celebrate sixty years of service to North Central Indiana, we are devoting the entire 2005-06 academic year to reflecting on what we have been and what we have accomplished in the past. In the sixty years from 1945 to the present, IU Kokomo has made many contributions to the region and has graduated more than 8,000 individuals. Most of these graduates work and live here and many serve in leadership positions.

Because we already have so many other venues this year for focusing on our past, I am taking this opportunity to talk about our future. When we dedicated Hunt Hall several years ago, my dear friend Virgil Hunt, in his remarks at the ceremony, turned to me while commenting on campus progress since he had been the CEO and said, “and you are making it all come out just as I’d planned,” and then laughed at his own playfulness! At first I just laughed with Virgil at his notion that we here at IU Kokomo now would have known what he had envisioned in 1945. But, as I reflect back on my numerous conversations with Virgil and on the correspondence he had with me, I see that perhaps he was right after all.

We are, of course, always a “work in progress,” but now more than ever we need to take a number of steps forward in our pursuit of excellence and impact on the region. What we are poised to become through our strategic plan reflects the values that Virgil held dear. As you read about Virgil’s work, you realize that his interests were all about enhancing student persistence and success, serving regional educational needs, developing partnerships and community support, and serving a diverse constituency. Our strategic plan needs to continue to reflect those commitments, and I believe that it will.

Last year I had the good fortune of attending the Fiscal Officer Development Series alumni workshop which featured a seminar based on the book *Good to Great*. As you know, Jim Collins’ book focuses on the characteristics that distinguish a good company from one that leaps to greatness. One of the characteristics of a great company is the understanding of a key economic metric that underlies decision making [for example, profit per employee was the key metric for Wells Fargo]. The other two characteristics revolve around two questions (1) what can we be best at? and (2) what are we passionate about? “Built to Last” (the title of Collins’ earlier book) companies identify not only an economic metric, but

also a complexity of variables used to define success. If we want to be not just great but “Built to Last” what must we do?

To move forward, I believe that our target needs to shift to include not only “enrollment” but “completion,” specifically to completion of a baccalaureate or master’s degree. It is absolutely of continuing importance that we continue to aggressively recruit students, and the better prepared they are at entrance, the more likely they will be to succeed. But it is no longer enough to bring students in the door. For the students who come to us, regardless of their entrance point as new freshmen, transfers, or graduate students, degree completion should be a goal that we reinforce in as many ways as possible.

In order to accomplish this outcome, specific strategic priorities need to be in place. As you know, we began our strategic planning process last year. A mission statement was completed for the campus, and was just approved by the Faculty Senate on September 19 after some revision. That statement is being forwarded to the Trustees for their approval. A vision statement, as well as a statement of commitments to teaching and learning, engagement, diversity, innovation, and assessment, was also developed. A

significant amount of data about the future of the campus was collected by our consultant and organized into twenty-four initiatives. Our campus committee then grouped those items into several overarching themes. Over the summer, Vice Chancellor Green and I have been working on the elimination of redundancy and refinement of those themes into draft Strategic Priorities. These Priorities and some suggested goals will be reviewed and analyzed by our campus committee at our next strategic planning meeting. Most importantly, benchmarks to measure success will need to be identified as well. Our task will then be to develop action steps for some of these goals, while others that are more unit-specific will be handed off to the appropriate campus division for further refinement.

The Strategic Priorities emerging from our exercise are at this point to:

- Attract and retain an increased number of better-prepared students
- Add a wider range of baccalaureate and limited number of master's degree programs that reflect regional needs, while phasing out some associate degree programs

- Establish mutually beneficial partnerships with regional businesses, industries, governmental, and non-profit organizations
- Promote campus diversity to prepare our graduates to function in a multi-racial and ethnic world
- Enhance campus visibility with key regional leaders, increase the value of the campus to the region, and promote greater external support for the campus

While we do not yet have all the goals established for these Priorities, let me make a few comments about each. Attracting and retaining better prepared students will require several things of us. First, our recruitment practices will have to become more focused. Second, we will need to learn how to leverage financial aid as do our colleagues in the private sector. Third, we will need to more fully involve parents in the process, and fourth, our messages will need to focus on “completion” as “top of mind,” so that students will fully understand that we are a place not just to start but to finish.

With respect to degree programs, we will need to continue to engage in a dialogue with leaders in our region to ensure that our academic programs align with regional needs. We already know that there are significant needs in early childhood education, public management, informatics, and dental hygiene, and indeed other areas will emerge as the region's economy changes with the times. As our mission becomes more focused on baccalaureate and graduate education, we will also need to examine our associate degree programs (of which there are only six) as to their continuation in the next decade.

It goes without saying that promoting diversity remains an important priority for all of us in higher education, and I would encourage us to focus on what Vice President Charlie Nelms calls "full diversity." What that means to me is that we will need to focus our efforts not only on recruitment and retention of employees and students of diverse backgrounds but that we will continue to support and enhance campus cultural and curricular venues that represent diversity.

Finally, we will need to significantly enhance our partnerships with organizations in our region and enhance our visibility with key leaders. If

you believe in the idea of “the rising tide floating all boats,” then you should believe that visibility and those resulting partnerships will lead to greater prosperity and success for north central Indiana and not just for the university.

I believe that Virgil would fully embrace and support our desire to become an institution that focuses on student success and degree completion. We can reinforce the idea of completion by developing a strong base of alumni who serve as examples of “completion” by virtue of their own graduation, donors who will support student success through the provision of scholarship and other academic support, and regional partnerships that will focus on the value of education. We already have examples of success in each of these areas. Our alumni membership numbers exceed the national average for our type of campus. We have received an increased number of named scholarship contributions. Our \$1.5 million CAPE grant announced yesterday for kindergarten readiness will lead to great partnership opportunities, as will our \$1 million Federal earmark for economic development. Our “Project Complete” is contacting all 6,000 residents in North Central Indiana who have some IU credit from any IU campus but have not graduated to tell them about degree completion on our campus.

Through these projects and other means, we will be able to leverage our resources, both human and financial, to ensure student success and completion.

While I have outlined an ambitious agenda, I believe it is doable if we all work toward a common goal. It is my intention to have the strategic planning process completed by the end of the Fall semester so that we can begin to implement the goals we have set forth. I invite you to join me as we advance our mission and move the university to the next level of success.