

IU Kokomo Spring Convocation 2007

Solutions for our Future: The IU Kokomo Response

For decades, the higher education enterprise in the United States has been viewed as the best in the world and one that other nations wanted to emulate. International graduates of our colleges and universities became leaders in their home countries. Our own citizens valued the higher education experience as did political leaders who demonstrated their interest through state legislative financial support.

Somewhere along the way, that value has become somewhat displaced. Fewer public dollars are being directed to support higher education. The percentage of adults with bachelor's degrees does not seem to be increasing very swiftly; in short we seem to be "stalled out." There are a whole host of reasons for the diminished level of support and interest, but it would take me the rest of the morning to outline them. Many of them relate to

competition for dollars, need to support other pressing social problems and shifts in demographics. I do not mean to imply that I believe that our industry is not providing value, but that there are simply many other factors at play in today's environment that lead to diminished support.

Last year, the American Council on Education initiated a public campaign called "Solutions for Our Future" to help our citizens understand more about the true value of higher education. The purpose of this campaign is to encourage more people to attend and complete college, and to garner public support for the higher education enterprise. Many colleges and universities signed on to participate in this campaign, including IU Kokomo.

While this campaign is national in scope, let's consider how we can bring it closer to home. Today, my question to you is, "how can we make IU Kokomo a "solution for the future" of North Central Indiana? How can we promote its value to the region?"

And how can we encourage more of our citizens to participate in and complete bachelor's degree programs?

Let's review a few facts first. First, some statistics. The percentage of adults in the U.S. with bachelor's degrees hovers around 25%. The percentage for our state is about 19%. The percentage for our region is about 12% (including Hamilton County). The numbers speak for themselves. Our graduation rate is about 25% as well, meaning that of the students who begin here as *first-time, full-time freshman*, only about 25% graduate with bachelor's degrees in a six year time period.

Second, some history. Historically, the regional campuses of IU were established as extension centers or "feeders" for IU Bloomington. Here and elsewhere in Indiana students would "try out" college to see if it was a good fit for them, or receive remediation to make up deficiencies in preparation for attending college, or stay closer to home and get a start before going away to

Bloomington or some other residential college. There are many people in North Central Indiana who did exactly that, and that's not a bad thing! In many ways, what I have just described are some of the functions of a community college. Gradually, degrees were added at the associate level and then in a very limited way at the bachelors and masters levels. One of our campuses in fact has described itself as a "community college with a few bachelor's degrees." In 1985 our campus awarded twice as many associate degrees as bachelor's degrees and while we have made progress in reversing that percentage, I predict that that trend will not look dramatically different until a few years after we complete our last ASN cohort, probably in 2010.

In 2000 the ICHE directed IU's regional campuses to take on a fully baccalaureate mission and begin phasing out both remedial programs and associate programs to make way for the Community College of Indiana, a new entity funded by the state. When I arrived here in the 1999-2000 academic year, it was quite apparent

that we needed to begin the serious and swift transition to a fully baccalaureate mission and we began to do so, adding degrees and programs in areas that best suited the needs of the region. Our strategic planning process and President Herbert's Mission Differentiation Project further reinforced that shift in mission, as did the change in our admissions standards.

Given the internal and external forces that have led us to the baccalaureate mission, what is our "Solution for the Future" of North Central Indiana? It is first and foremost to enroll and graduate more bachelor's degree students who will then populate the leadership and professional ranks of the region in order to build a better economy and quality of life. Secondly, our goal is to serve as the convener of the region around issues of concern (be they economic development or arts and culture or social issues) so that the region becomes a more viable place to live and work and so that we help our citizens and especially our leaders make good decisions.

While we await the completion of our Strategic Plan Action Teams' reports which will outline long-term specific strategies for the implementation of all of our goals, there are several things we need to initiate. First, we need to make our citizens more aware of the degrees we offer, shifting our focus from generic to targeted marketing and emphasizing the underlying message of "knowledge that works." In the past, IU has directed us to be more general in our approach to marketing, but with a whole host of new programs, we need a more defined strategy, at least in the short term, to acquaint the public with our shift in mission, our new programs, and the careers that could result from participation in them.

Second, we need to develop a more segmented recruitment strategy to recognize our five different student markets. These markets are -high school enrollees who would come to us as seniors for an "academy" experience to earn college credits; high school students who would come to us as college freshman; transfer students;

beginning adult students; and “stop out” returning adults. These are very different groups of potential students with differing needs and expectations. I am pleased to say that we will be initiating an “academy” program for high school students next Fall. I am also pleased that we have recruited a new leader in admissions/financial aid who brings private sector experience to the table with respect to segment two, recruiting college freshmen. Our Project Complete program is already demonstrating success in recruiting “stop out” returning adults. In this program we are “working” a prospect list of 8,000 citizens in our region who have some IU credit but no degree and encouraging them to return to school to complete a bachelor’s degree. In short, in all respects we are absolutely headed in the right direction.

Third, we need to get more potential students on campus to see what is really happening at IU Kokomo. I am excited by the fact that over Spring Break, nearly 3,000 potential students will be on campus for five different programs – Congressman Dan Burton’s

Leadership Academy, Howard County Youth Leadership Summit, Peru Youth Leadership Summit, Kokomo Tribune Spelling Bee, and “Welcome to the Real World.” That’s the kind of exposure we need, and I thank all of you who will be hosting those events.

Fourth, we always need to continue to look at our program mix and at new programs. I am pleased to see that the BS in Secondary Education and the Master of Public Management degrees are moving forward through the system. We continue to look at new programs that will serve the region, such as dental hygiene or special education.

Fifth, we need to continue our engagement efforts, which are beginning to pay dividends. Last year the focus of our convocation was “engagement” and we were all startled to hear just how much was being done by our staff, faculty, and individual units. Our efforts are beginning to pay off. Yesterday I was asked if the University would consider facilitating the discussion of possible

consolidation of our economic development organizations in Howard county and I hope that we can be helpful in this endeavor. We have some real opportunities to really make a difference in our region by sharing our skills and expertise.

Sixth, we need to participate with our colleagues in a national effort to be more accountable to the public, helping our citizens understand the real costs of college, the real benefits, and the real outcomes.

Earlier, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings convened a group of leaders to examine U.S. higher education. Their report, *A Test of Leadership*, outlined some of the things that the Commission felt needed to happen in order to improve this sector of education. Two national higher education associations (AASCU and NASULGC) representing the public sector decided to take the lead in creating a voluntary system of accountability

(VSA). I will be serving as Chair of the System Design and Information Task Force for this effort.

These are some of the things that are happening here and at the national level that will move us forward to provide “Solutions for Our Future.” There are many more ahead, and I invite you to join me in these efforts.

January, 2007