“Importance of Institutional Collaboration to Advance International Education”

Summit of Presidents from Minority Serving Institutions
Remarks as prepared for Michael A. McRobbie
President, Indiana University
CIEE Global Institute
Gneisenaustrasse #27 (G27)
Wednesday, November 4, 2015
11:15 a.m.

1. INTRODUCTION

Thank you very much.

It is a great pleasure to be here for this Summit of Presidents from Minority-Serving Institutions.

I want to thank Ms. Gasman and her colleagues from the University of Pennsylvania’s Center for Minority Serving Institutions for leading this morning’s excellent presentation.

And I am very pleased that so many presidential colleagues are here from institutions from across the United States.

As you may have gathered by my accent, though I have been an American citizen now for many years, I was born and raised in Australia. My father actually emigrated to Australia from Scotland after serving in the British Army in World War II. He did not finish high school, and so I am actually a first-generation college graduate. Hence, I know first-hand the enormous impact a university education can offer each of us, and I can honestly say that such an education has been vital in my own career.

Minority Serving Institutions like yours are major gateways to higher education for many students who are part of under-represented minority groups, are from low-income families, and who are often the first in their families to attend college.

2. IU'S DEEP AND ABIDING COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND EQUITY

While Indiana University is not a minority-serving institution in the same sense as many of the institutions represented here today, IU has a longstanding deep and abiding commitment to diversity and equity. As part of that commitment, we work to recruit students and faculty from diverse cultural backgrounds, to ensure that cultural diversity is well represented in our curriculum, and to ensure that members of our community who come from diverse backgrounds interact with one another in educationally purposeful ways.

Indiana University's eleventh president, Herman B Wells is a legendary figure in the history of our university and in American higher education more generally. Among many other accomplishments, he led IU's efforts to become a truly international university by attracting world-class international faculty, developing new international relationships with other governments and institutions, establishing area studies programs, and expanding IU's foreign languages curricula. He also played a major role in the establishment of the Free University of Berlin (Freie Universität) just after the Second World War—now one of Germany's and the world's great universities and which was a beacon of free and independent teaching and learning in darker times.

In 1944, President Wells took what was, at that time, the very unusual step of speaking out publicly on civil rights. In a speech delivered at a Bloomington church he had attended as an IU student, he gave a vigorous exhortation on "the brotherhood of man."

Wells said, in part: “We must renounce prejudice of color, class, and race in Bloomington and Monroe County, Indiana. Our renunciation must be personally implemented by deeds. Our actions will be the measure of the sincerity of our words.”[1]

With this statement, President Wells expressed Indiana University’s deep and abiding commitment to diversity and equity.

His own actions amply demonstrated the sincerity of his words. He would go on to lead the charge to desegregate Indiana University’s athletics programs and facilities as well as its dining and residence halls. He took a number of actions—often without much fanfare—that helped to improve race relations in the entire Bloomington community as well. He also opened IU's doors to African American teachers from the southern United States who could not earn master's degrees in their home states. Many teachers from that era hold graduate degrees from IU because Wells encouraged them to come to IU Bloomington.

Today, through the efforts overseen by the Office of IU’s Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Multicultural Affairs (DEMA, as we call it at IU), we are committed to building on the strong foundations established by a number of visionary leaders and champions of equality and social justice who, over many years, helped to create a culture at Indiana University where diversity is embraced in the broadest sense.

The growing diversity of our flagship campus in Bloomington—which welcomed its largest, most diverse and most academically prepared group of first-year students this fall—reflects our sustained and focused effort in this area. It reflects the outstanding success of initiatives such as the Groups Scholars Program, which has provided guidance and support for low-income and first generation students at IU for nearly 50 years, and the Hudson and Holland Scholars program, which recruits high achieving, underrepresented minority students to the IU Bloomington campus. And the IU

[1] Herman B Wells, Remarks on Layman Sunday at the First Methodist Church, Bloomington, IN, Delivered March 5, 1944, IU Archives.

Bloomington freshman class includes a record number of 21st Century Scholars, an Indiana program that provides financial support to students whose families meet income guidelines and who qualify for admission to state universities.

Still, there is more to be done not only to attract talented minority students to our campuses, but also to partner with and support the efforts of Minority Serving Institutions.

Indiana University is proud to partner with a number of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the STEM Initiative. Since 2007, this partnership has provided students with research opportunities in the STEM disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, promoted access to graduate education, encouraged faculty collaborations, and helped to generate faculty relationships that create additional educational and research opportunities.

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDY ABROAD

Of course, many of the same factors that compel us to work to foster diversity in a university like IU are the same reasons that international engagement and international experience are so important.

By embracing diversity, we learn more about other perspectives, other customs and traditions, and increase our ability to solve the problems that confront us.

As this summit illustrates, in our increasingly interconnected world, international literacy, gained ideally through a period of study abroad, is an essential part of a university education.

Indiana University's role as a public university—the state of Indiana's flagship university—and one that is fortunate to have a supportive state legislature and large and

generous donor base—means we have a special commitment to the state and all of its citizens. This means that we must not only look to improve regional economies through educational programs tailored to produce graduates needed in these regions, but we must also look toward international horizons to best prepare our students for the challenges and opportunities of the global future.

The need for individuals with global cultural understanding and experience and the ability to work productively with people from different cultures and traditions has never been greater. The world has not seemed this perilous for 70 years. By increasing the number of students who serve and study abroad, we provide future leaders in our country who are globally literate.

Study and service abroad will continue to be an essential part of a 21st century education and IU is committed to doing everything we can to increase the number of students who are studying abroad no matter what their background, no matter what their family circumstances.

4. WORKING TO OVERCOME BARRIERS

As is the case at many institutions, most IU students who study abroad are either privately funded or have access to the limited financial aid that is available in this area. This has always made it difficult for low-income and minority students to study abroad. Students who are relying on financial aid and who are also sometimes working multiple jobs to pay for their college educations often simply do not see study abroad as an option.

So as part of our recently announced fundraising campaign that involves all IU campuses, we are seeking to raise $20 million that the university will match, to support 400 new study-abroad scholarships especially targeted at low-income students.

The Office of the IU Bloomington Provost has also, over the last three years, provided significant funding to support study abroad by underrepresented students who are part of the IU programs I mentioned earlier—the Groups Scholars, Hudson & Holland Scholars, and 21st Century Scholars Programs.

Often, of course, there are barriers that prevent minority students from studying abroad that go beyond the financial considerations. Thus, one-dimensional approaches—even important measures like increasing scholarship funds—are not enough.

Students whose home backgrounds do not include family members or friends who have studied—or even travelled abroad—may be less open to the idea of studying abroad.

Martin McCrory, IU's Associate Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Multicultural Affairs, will speak in a moment about his experience in helping to address some of these challenges.

One innovative measure that will help address the challenge of increasing the number of minority students who study abroad—and one in which Indiana University is proud to be involved—is the CIEE's Passport Initiative. CIEE has committed $20 million in scholarships and grants to American students through "Generation Study Abroad" a five-year initiative that seeks to double the number of U.S. students studying abroad through credit or non-credit programs by 2020. As part of this initiative, CIEE has pledged to sponsor 10,000 new student passports by 2020.

Indiana University will be one of the first schools to participate in the CIEE's Passport Caravan, a program that encourages students to apply for a passport early in their college career. In partnership with CIEE, DEMA and the Office of the IU Bloomington Provost have committed funds to help cover the cost of passport applications for IU students. CIEE plans to hold many more such events over the next five years on college and university campuses across the United States.

It is our hope that one day, all incoming IU students will have a passport when they arrive on our campuses.

Even beyond the Passport Initiative, CIEE is partnering with DEMA to help develop additional programs that will serve underrepresented students at IU and help to overcome some of the additional challenges and barriers to increasing minority student participation in study abroad. We are enormously grateful for CIEE's assistance in this vitally important area.

5. THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION

But, of course, in order to attract more students, it is also necessary that study abroad programs are innovative and relevant to the interests of our students.

One major way to ensure that this is the case is through exchanges and partnerships with international peer institutions.

IU also has a long history of this critically important kind of international institutional engagement. We now have such institutional partnerships on every continent and in nearly every part of the world.

Such relationships are vitally important to our research and education missions. They support faculty research and play a vital role in our faculty and student recruitment efforts. They can also provide the venues and facilities for study abroad programs.

I have had the opportunity to visit most of the countries with which IU has institutional partnerships during my time as president. These visits have been vital to assessing the strength of our institutional partnerships. I have seen first-hand the facilities where research takes place, I have sat in on classes at our partner institutions, and I have met the faculty who teach those classes.

Our goal is to establish truly sustainable international relationships by establishing close academic and intellectual relationships between our institutions and the academic programs within our partner universities. As those programs continue to thrive, the close relationship between our institutions will continue to thrive, as will the potential for the establishment of new and innovative study abroad programs.

Of course, our institutional relationships cannot provide venues and programs for all of our study abroad programs—and so we also rely on visionary partners like CIEE, who widen and expand opportunities for our students beyond what our institutional relationships can provide.

6. CONCLUSION

Indiana University is committed to opening wider the gates of opportunity to students from all backgrounds.

We have much more work to do to ensure that all our campuses more closely reflect the ethnic composition of their regions and that minority students at IU receive the full benefit and are full partners in IU's international activities.

We are fully committed to partnering with Minority Serving Institutions. While we have challenges that differ from yours—and while we are very fortunate to have resources that, we realize, not all institutions have—we are among the most active internationally engaged universities in the United States.

We look forward to engaging in conversation with you, to share what we have learned along the way, and to support—in whatever way we can—your efforts to increase and strengthen the international engagement of your institutions.

Thank you very much.