



Honoring Dr. Bringle's Legacy

By William M. Plater, Executive Vice Chancellor Emeritus on behalf of the IUPUI community
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Bob Bringle has achieved the enviable status of an internationally recognized scholar. He combines his research and experience in psychology, for which he has attained wide recognition, with path breaking work in research related to service learning and community engagement. He has achieved a singular distinction because he has applied his knowledge through administrative leadership as the founding director of the Center for Service and Learning—the focal point of IUPUI's reputation as a leading engaged university.

His accomplishments have been recognized locally with the rank of Chancellor's Professor at Indiana University and such accolades as the Pinnell Award for service; nationally with the Thomas Ehrlich Award for Service Learning; and internationally with an honorary doctorate awarded by the University of the Free State in South Africa. There are numerous other external validations of his distinguished status at all levels of attainment in teaching, research, and service. At his retirement, Bob leaves not a void to be filled but a model to be emulated. His legacy will endure through the leadership team he has recruited and the principles of civic mindedness he has inculcated in the character of IUPUI.

Bob Bringle arrived at IUPUI in 1974 with a PhD in psychology from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. IUPUI was not yet five years old, and this Hoosier from Richmond, who had attended Hanover College as an undergraduate, thought he was just passing through, like so many others who came to IUPUI at its beginning. But something made him see IUPUI for the unique opportunity that it became. He helped build the campus as he developed his own unique blend of scholarship, engagement, administration, and teaching. Others in his discipline could speak more knowingly of his work as a psychologist, but I would like to celebrate what he has achieved in the area of community engagement and service learning—involving both intellectual and administrative work.

As Executive Vice Chancellor and Dean of the Faculties, I worked with Bringle for nearly seventeen years (and I have watched closely in the intervening years) as he helped shape a new field of inquiry and practice, applying his scholarly training as a psychologist to developing a deeper understanding of the value and practice of service learning. He is, without question, one of the five or six people in the United States who have developed this now-proven pedagogy into the global phenomenon that it has become. When anyone seeks evidence for the value of service learning, they turn first to Bob Bringle. Few scholars ever see the kind of impact that Bringle has had on whole institutions, let alone a pedagogical movement.

His contributions, ranging from the "engaged department" initiative to a student scholarship program that was one of the first in the nation to recognize service as merit to a nationally-exemplary model of partnership with the near-by Washington Community School, have made IUPUI one of the most widely recognized engaged universities in the country, attracting such prestigious designation's as the President's Award for Community Service first awarded by President Bush, or U.S. News and World Report's designation of IUPUI as one of the country's most "up and coming" universities. Bob help create a sense of community within IUPUI—involving staff and students as well as faculty—as a value of inclusion that made connections with the larger community so vital and strong.

Bob Bringle has made IUPUI a much better place for his presence, and he has--by himself--enhanced the reputation of IUPUI to a significant degree. IUPUI celebrates Bob Bringle and thanks him for his commitment throughout a professional career well-lived. IUPUI will remain engaged, Bob.