

Greetings from IUPUI

April 2006

As I write this, it is a dreary Indiana day, but there's excitement in the air.

Today, March 29, we announce that Uday Sukhatme will be the new IUPUI executive vice chancellor and dean of the faculties, pending approval of the IU Board of Trustees at its April 7th meeting.

I've often marveled at the remarkable consensus that exists at IUPUI on where we need to be in terms of our future and our mission, vision, values, and goals. Our campus is more focused than most. We have a clear sense of our commitment in reaching out to the world from Indianapolis.

This search to fill the key position of chief academic officer for the campus is an example of this consensus. In a very competitive pool, Uday was not only my first choice but also the first choice of the search committee as well as the deans and faculty who met him and provided comments during his campus visits. I was impressed by the excellent pool of candidates we attracted and thrilled that we recruited our top pick. I am also grateful to Vice Chancellor for Planning and Institutional Improvement Trudy Banta. It is no surprise to me that the key person behind building a consensus on IUPUI's strategic plan for the past nearly 15 years also chaired the search committee and shepherded this process to a successful conclusion.

All who met Uday were in agreement that he knows urban research universities well. Since August 2002, he has served as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Before that, he was at the University of Illinois at Chicago for 22 years, where he held the positions of interim vice provost for academic programs, associate vice chancellor for academic affairs, and head of the department of physics.

Uday guided SUNY Buffalo's College of Arts and Sciences through a period of remarkable change. Beginning with the creation of a strategic plan to advance the academic reputation of the college, he was successful in establishing a productive environment for interdisciplinary research, including "signature centers of excellence," and generating a 60 percent growth in research funding. He launched a national poetry contest and a lecture series aimed at high school students. It was designed to introduce them to the intellectual excitement of college and set their sights on earning academic credentials as high as their abilities would take them.

Uday's instinct for creating conditions that stimulate the educational aspirations of the region served fits exactly with IUPUI's stated commitment to advance the state of Indiana and the intellectual growth of its citizens.

The chief academic officer of a campus must also be a role model who leads by example. Uday—who holds a Sc.D. in physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a S.B. in physics (also from MIT), and B.Sc. with honors in mathematics from the University of Delhi, India—is an extremely prolific researcher in theoretical physics. With more than 180 publications to his credit, 13 of them are categorized as “top-cited,” an indication of their influence on current thinking in the field. His research in high-energy phenomenology and supersymmetric quantum mechanics has been funded continuously by U.S. Department of Energy grants for some 22 years.

At the University of Illinois at Chicago, Uday was also one of the principal investigators on a five-year, \$2.5 million project funded by the National Science Foundation aimed at improving minority enrollment in science, mathematics, engineering, and technology disciplines. As I mentioned in my recent “Report to the Community,” IUPUI should be a destination campus for studies in the life sciences. That means we have to build strengths in undergraduate education, especially science, technology, engineering, mathematics—what is called “STEM” education. It’s critical for our future. We want high school graduates to think of IUPUI as a place where life science is “happening.” And minority students need particular attention.

Uday, along with Carl Cowen, our relatively new dean of the School of Science, will be close partners in these efforts. Carl is a theoretical and applied mathematician we recruited from Purdue University. Because math and science performance in K-12 is a key predictor of success in higher education, we simply must have strong math and science teachers. To that end, Carl is working with Executive Associate Dean Khaula Murtadha in our School of Education and others to develop disciplinary strength in STEM education as an integral part of teacher preparation. That kind of cross-disciplinary, civically engaged collaboration is the kind of “Destination Life Sciences” possibility we want to create all over the campus—from freshmen to faculty and all the way through.

We are convinced that Uday has the background, creativity, leadership skills, and interpersonal style to succeed a 19-year veteran (Bill Plater) in making Indiana’s urban research and academic health sciences campus a model for the 21st century.

Uday’s wife, Medha, shares a physics background and also has some 20 years’ experience in data processing management and computer programming. I know you will all join me in welcoming them to Indianapolis when they become part of the IUPUI campus community in July.

Charles R. Bantz
Chancellor

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