

Greetings from IUPUI

October 2006

The start of the school year for colleges and universities typically gets front-page coverage in newspapers across the nation. You see photos of students unpacking in dorm rooms and interviews with parents about their hopes and worries for college-bound sons and daughters. You read so many articles and columns expressing concern about the future of higher education, one could easily miss the good news.

Scrolling through my e-mail last month, an item stopped my cursor: "Saviors of Our Cities: Twenty Five Urban Colleges Noted for Positive Economic and Social Benefit to Their Communities." It sounded like important news. I opened it and was stunned!

The 25 urban colleges were ranked for contributions to their cities. The top three are well-known private universities: the University of Southern California (Los Angeles), the University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia), and the University of Dayton.

Number four is the top public university in the nation—IUPUI!

Evan Dobbelle, author of the study on which the ranking is based, said, "This list is designed to recognize 25 outstanding institutions that represent hundreds of others who every day become more and more important by providing stability in every social indices in cities across America."

Citing nearly 20 years' research on higher education's economic impact and the experience of four university presidencies, Dr. Dobbelle, now president of the New England Board of Higher Education, outlined his ranking criteria in the Boston Herald. The criteria were designed to accommodate scale in terms of institution size, geography, student population, endowment, and population of the city. They were:

1. The institution's longstanding involvement with their urban community.
2. The real dollars invested through their foundations and annual budgets.
3. Their catalyst effect on additional partners for social and economic change.
4. Their presence felt from their payroll, research, and purchasing power.
5. Faculty and student involvement in community service.
6. Continued sustainability of neighborhood initiatives that in many ways have supplanted government programs.
7. The marked difference it has made on local student access and affordability to attend college through K-12 partnerships.
8. The qualitative esprit of the institution in its engagement.
9. A quantifiable increase in positive recognition of the institution as demonstrated by a rise in

applications by prospective students and resources raised through renewed alumni giving for community projects and local scholarships.

10. Recognition of the impact of these institutions within their communities gathered from interviews with educators and public officials throughout the country.

Dobelle published his article in the Boston Herald to highlight some of the schools missed by other college ranking systems like U.S. News & World Report. He made the point that there are many cities where decisions made by urban colleges and universities play a major role in the economic and social health of their community.

Indianapolis, often praised by urban planners for its downtown renaissance, has been blessed with a series of mayors from both major parties, backed by business and community leaders, who realized in the late 1960s that a great city needs a great university at its heart. Established in 1969 when the trustees of Indiana University and Purdue University agreed to merge their extension campuses in Indianapolis, IUPUI has grown from an enrollment of fewer than 10,000 to nearly 30,000 students, 97 percent of which are from Indiana. One in 10 Indianapolis-area residents has attended or graduated from IUPUI, and more than 65 percent of our alumni remain in Indiana. All those mayors publicly, and often, express appreciation for IUPUI.

From the beginning, IUPUI has been a partner in the city's cultural, economic, and workforce development, but we have also kept pace with the region's changing needs and priorities. IUPUI has made the state's agenda for its economic future part of our mission as a campus, leading with Indiana's determination to build on its health and life science industries as a particular area of focus. With the nation's second largest medical school and largest multidisciplinary nursing school, plus a new biomedical engineering program, IUPUI is a powerhouse for research and training of professionals in the life and health sciences. IUPUI also contributes to economic development efforts in information technology, advanced manufacturing, philanthropy and nonprofit management, and arts/culture/tourism.

An Indianapolis Star columnist, John Ketzenberger, acknowledged IUPUI's vital role in the city's future in an August 24, 2006, editorial. He wrote: "Clearly IU and Purdue have advantages . . . in connecting with local business. The biggest advantage, of course, is IUPUI. The Big Ten universities are just starting to unleash the economic development potential of IUPUI, their joint campus just west of downtown. Their role in the local business community will solidify as IUPUI's influence grows."

IUPUI may not, in the strictest sense, be a savior of the city of Indianapolis, but we are the city's committed partner. For 37 years, our faculty, staff, students, and alumni have sought to help make our city stronger by bringing to life the partnerships that are reflected in our name: Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis. Usually, when IUPUI gets national media recognition, we take a ribbing for our cumbersome name and unpronounceable acronym. That's OK with us. Our name says what it needs to. IUPUI is a partnership campus of Indiana University and Purdue University in our state's capital city, Indianapolis. And we're proud of it!

Charles R. Bantz
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