Greetings from IUPUI

Commencement time is here—and what better time than to share some stories with you about our graduates?

A total of 5,667 students were eligible to receive degrees at our commencement exercises on May 11. Some 4,559 students received degrees from Indiana University and 963 from Purdue University. Of the total, 2,980 were baccalaureate degrees, which puts us back on track toward my inauguration goal of doubling IUPUI’s bachelor’s degree graduation rate. The projected goal is 4,400.

Among this year’s graduates were several of our Nina Mason Pulliam Legacy Scholars. Since its launch in 2001, the program’s retention rate at IUPUI is a truly impressive 94 percent. Their grade point averages exceed 3.0. At the same time, these students have had to overcome significant barriers that often make college degree completion an overwhelming challenge for some.

The need-based scholarship program, created by the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, seeks to aid incoming freshmen, ages 18-25, raised through the child welfare system; youth and adults with physical disabilities; and returning students with dependents. The program supports students at IUPUI, Ivy Tech Community College, Arizona State University, and Maricopa Community Colleges by paying full in-state tuition, fees, books, and a living allowance.

IUPUI provides state-of-the-art academic support services in helping students with significant educational barriers to aspire to, and succeed in, college. We know that whatever we do to help the Nina Scholars informs best practices in serving all students.

In the Class of 2008 is Nina Scholar Aundra Lambert, who is visually impaired, and Angela Russell, a mother of 8. Each completed a Bachelor of Social Work degree and will start master’s degrees in social work next spring.

Demetrees Hutchins, a former foster youth, completed her undergraduate degree in 2005 and will receive a Master of Arts in Philanthropic Studies this year. She begins a doctoral degree in higher education in the fall.

Also in the Class of 2008 are the first four people in the nation to earn a Ph.D. in philanthropic studies. They will be among the first generation of faculty specifically trained to teach and conduct research in philanthropy and nonprofit management.

More than 30 students are in the Ph.D. program, which began in 2004. Besides preparing future faculty
members, it serves mid-career and senior nonprofit executives who want to deepen their knowledge or enhance their ability to compete for top leadership positions nationally. It is the first traditional-format Ph.D. in philanthropic studies in the United States. Because the center is part of our School of Liberal Arts, these four are the first doctorates earned in both the degree program and the school.

A student receiving his master's degree in media arts and science from the IU School of Informatics at IUPUI this month is heading to Pixar Animation Studios in San Francisco. Frank Tai, a native of Taiwan, will be a technical director for the studio's newly established in-residence internship program. Among other duties, he will assist with the production of Pixar's forthcoming feature film release, Toy Story 3.

Since established in 2000 on both the IUPUI and IUB campuses, the School of Informatics has quadrupled its enrollment to more than 1,400 students, conferred more than 600 degrees, and begun offering the nation's first Ph.D. in Informatics.

Meeting the need for academic degree programs in new and promising fields is a key priority at IUPUI, as these offerings in informatics and philanthropic studies show.

The latest new degree offerings will be the Bachelor of Science in motorsports engineering and a Ph.D. in Biostatistics.

The Purdue faculty in the School of Engineering and Technology at IUPUI developed the motorsports degree, which will be offered to students this fall. There currently are no comparable programs in the central U.S. and only a limited number in the country. Yet, what better place to have a motorsports engineering program than the home of the Indy 500 and the Brickyard 400?

The Ph.D. in Biostatistics will be jointly offered by our Purdue School of Science and IU School of Medicine and will support Indiana’s life sciences initiative. These are just the latest examples of IUPUI’s contributions to our state’s economic development.

Charles R. Bantz
Chancellor