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ISU Special Announcement

Tuesday, August 25, 2015

Washington Monthly: Indiana State No. 1 in civic engagement

When it comes to civic engagement, Indiana State University ranks No. 1 in the country among 279 national universities, according to The Washington Monthly's just-released 2015 college rankings.

The honor follows two straight years of No. 1 rankings for community service hours by students. Indiana State is No. 20 in The Washington Monthly's overall rankings. That's higher than any other institution - public or private - in Indiana or Illinois. The university is also in the top 20 percent of more than 400 Midwestern colleges and universities that the magazine says offer the "Best Bang for the Buck."

"It is exciting to be considered the best in the country for the entire service category. It is also very gratifying to see Indiana State ranked 20th overall among all national universities for the impact we are having on our students' lives and society at large," said Dan Bradley, university president. "The Center for Community Engagement, under the leadership of Nancy Rogers and Heather Miklozek, and the entire campus continue to do great work. Their efforts are helping to improve our community and better prepare our students for productive lives and careers."

Bobby Moore, director of the Terre Haute Boys and Girls Club, where Bradley announced the ranking Tuesday, said student volunteers from Indiana State are a great asset.

"We utilize volunteers for all of our programs. Without Indiana State's help we would not be as successful as we are today," he said. "Indiana State students have a positive impact on the young people who participate in our programs."

Moore estimates between 50 and 75 Indiana State students serve the Boys and Girls Club through the course of a school year. Many do practicum hours at the facility or use it to help fulfill requirements for degrees in recreation and sport management.

The club is just one of dozens of organizations that benefit from the university's commitment to service. Last year, nearly 11,500 students participated in some type of community engagement, with nearly 9,000 of those taking part in some type of community-based learning, according to Rogers, vice president for university engagement.

"Indiana State University students provide an amazing amount of service to the community through their volunteerism, service-learning projects, service internships and other efforts," Rogers said. "Our faculty also has done a tremendous job of incorporating community-based learning into the curriculum. ISU truly has become one of a few premier service institutions in the country."

Student Corry Smith, a senior from Richton Park, Ill, began doing service work as a sophomore at Terre Haute's 14th and Chestnut Community Center using federal work study funds.

"I realized that I enjoyed working with kids and had the passion to educate and found a way to educate and I found a way to educate outside the classroom by helping them with homework and giving them the life skills that they need," Smith, a human development and family studies major, said.

He has since served pre-school children at Ryves Youth Center and recently completed an internship with Big Brothers/Big Sisters, where he became a big brother.

"It's important to realize that we all could be in unfortunate situations and that we could all use help from others," he said. "By not turning a blind eye and just helping someone with their homework or being a mentor, serving as a positive role model, I can really make a difference in a child's life or an adult's life. Baking five minutes of my day to serve someone else, I feel I'm doing my purpose here on earth."

In announcing its annual rankings, Washington Monthly noted Indiana State is not ranked by U.S. News & World Report, describing that publication's approach as identifying schools "that spend the most money, exclude the most students and impress a small circle of elites."

The non-profit publication says it ranks four-year colleges on upward mobility, research and service and uses a series of questions to explain the rationale behind its rankings:

- Are schools enrolling and graduating students of modest means and charging them a reasonable price?
- Are they preparing undergraduates to earn Ph.D.s, and creating the new technologies and ideas that will drive economic growth and advance human knowledge?
- Are schools encouraging their students to give back to the country by joining the military or the Peace Corps, or at least letting them use their work-study money to do community service?

Washington Monthly's measures of higher education "would make the whole system better, if only schools would compete on them," the magazine's editors said.

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