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Subject: ISU Special Announcement - President Curtis praises university's progress, details strategic plan changes in first fall address

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ISU Special Announcement

Wednesday, September 26, 2018

President Curtis praises university's progress, details strategic plan changes in first fall address

Indiana State University President Deborah J. Curtis utilized her first fall address to celebrate progress, detail proposed tweaks to the "There's More to Blue" strategic plan and make several announcements including a pay raise for employees.

"I want to lift up and celebrate the success this campus has realized in recent years," said Curtis. "You should all be congratulated for your good work."

Curtis noted the 25 percent increase in enrollment since 2008 and pointed out the growth in well-prepared students with this year's freshmen class having one of the best grade point averages and standardized test scores in recorded history. Nearly a third (31 percent) of this year's freshmen earned a high school grade point average of 3.5 or higher. The Honors College has also seen significant growth since 2012 with more than 1,000 students (up 35 percent) now enrolled.

"Indiana State has a special mission in the state's public higher education system. We attract a wide variety of students and are proud to continue to provide high-quality educational opportunities to a diverse body of students from all socio-economic backgrounds," said Curtis noting the high percentage of Pell-eligible and first-generation college students Indiana State serves.

Curtis also recognized the campus for its work in improving degree completion by 34 percent, degrees earned by Pell-eligible students by 41 percent; and on-time graduation rates (up 8.6 percentage points for Indiana students and 9.3 percentage points for all students).

"For the first time since the performance-based funding metrics were put into place by the Commission for Higher Education, Indiana State has positive numbers in every category," she said.

In addition to these improvements, a recent first-destination survey revealed a 94 percent placement rate among 2017 graduates within six months of graduation with an average starting salary of \$47,600.

"We are preparing our graduates for life after graduation which demonstrates the added value they are receiving for their investment in an Indiana State University education."

Curtis also talked about the role Indiana State plays in the local community and beyond with its commitment to community engagement through its community service leave policy for faculty and staff, the twice-annual Donaghy Day program which places students throughout the Wabash Valley to complete various service projects, the alternative breaks program which sends students around the world to serve those in need, and the nearly one million hours of service provided by Indiana State students on an annual basis. She also highlighted some of the local nonprofit boards on which Indiana State employees serve.

"The impact of Indiana State is significant and can be seen everywhere you look in our community and many other places near and far. In addition to the good work of our students, our employees and our alumni serve on the boards of almost every local non-profit organization."

Scholarly research also drew attention with recognition for the State's Bat Center for Research, Conservation and Outreach and the Center for Genomic Advocacy, both of which have garnered seven-figure grants.

Curtis announced proposed revisions to the "There's More to Blue" strategic plan which have been sent to campus for feedback. She emphasized that the plan was not being overhauled, merely tweaked and added that it would be reviewed and adjusted on an annual basis.

Student success remains the top goal with an added emphasis on degree completion. Curtis noted a dip in headcount enrollment for this fall and indicated that a new Strategic Enrollment Management Team is now meeting weekly to develop a comprehensive plan that includes recruitment of undergraduate and graduate students and also addresses distance, international and transfer enrollments. The plan will go beyond recruitment to include retention and degree completion efforts.

"The demographics of our world and our state are changing, and we must adapt as well. We must look beyond the traditional college-aged student whom we will continue to serve to also address the needs of the more than 700,000 Hoosiers with some college but no degree," Curtis said. "More than ever before, the state's economy needs an educated workforce to drive it."

Other revisions include cutting the goals from six to five by combining the former goal four on distinctive programs and experiences with goal two which focuses on experiential learning and career readiness. This will align the critically important career readiness skills needed by today's graduates with the curricular changes that will address them, she explained. Curtis also indicated that the university will be expanding its internship opportunities for students and is working on a number of partnerships to increase these high-impact experiences.

The plan will continue to place an emphasis on community engagement, and Curtis announced that the university will be sponsoring its third Habitat for Humanity house for a local family. Fundraising will begin this fall and the house will be built in 2019 with assistance from students in the Built Environment program as well as students, faculty and staff from the entire campus.

Curtis also indicated she will be spending a good deal of time working with the new vice president for university advancement, Andrea Angel, who will begin her new role in mid-November.

"We must increase our private support for this university. Philanthropic giving can make a tremendous difference in serving our students with unmet financial need and enhancing our academic programs, faculty support, and facilities," the president said.

Curtis also had good news for employees. She announced that the premiums employees pay for health benefits would not be increasing in 2019. In addition, eligible employees who have met or exceeded expectations will receive a 1.5 percent standard increase in pay effective Nov. 1.

"We are able to provide this increase and keep our health benefits costs stable through the strong fiscal management provided by our senior administration. To be able to do this despite a decline in enrollment this fall is a strong testament to good planning and management," she said. However, Curtis cautioned that budgets will be tight, and budget managers must engage in responsible stewardship of university resources while the university works to pivot to a more strategic model for enrollment management.

The winners of the second annual inclusive excellence awards were also announced. Carolyn Roberts from the Vigo County School Corporate received the community award, recent doctoral graduates Ashley Crossway, Sean Rogers and Emma Nye received the student award, Azizi Arrington-Bey, associate professor and coordinator of interior architectural design, was selected for the faculty/staff award, and the University College led by Dean Linda Maule and its Inclusive Excellence Committee led by Hope Williams and including Katelunn Duby-Edwardson, Angela Napier, Venita Stallings, Lynn Foster and Cedric Jones earned the administrative/academic unit category.

"These individuals are doing important work. Indiana State serves a diverse student body, and it is our obligation to ensure that everyone, regardless of their backgrounds and culture, can succeed in an environment of inclusive excellence on our campus," Curtis said.

Recent construction projects were also highlighted including the completion of the addition to the Health and Human Services building which opened earlier this year; the re-opening of Rhoads Hall, the last of the four student residence halls in Sycamore Towers to be renovated; and the current renovation of the Fine Arts Building which will be completed by fall of 2019. A \$16 million upgrade of Sycamore Dining Hall will also begin later this year.

A rendering featuring the redesigned Hulman Center project, which will go out for bid later this week, was also shared. Bids are anticipated to be awarded by the end of October. The presentation also included photos of the new full-service Starbucks, expected to open soon in Hulman Memorial Student Union.

As previously announced, the university is requesting \$18.4 million from the state legislature to fund the renovation of Dreiser Hall as part of the biennial budget process currently underway. The budget and capital projects will not be finalized until late spring.

Curtis also talked about the need for Indiana State employees, students and alumni to serve as advocates for their university and our community.

"Every individual contributes to the experiences our students, employees and visitors have on our campus. Every job and every detail is important. A state leader who recently visited commented on our well-landscaped campus by remarking that if attention has been paid to the smallest details, the larger things must be going well, too. Great things are happening at Indiana State, and we must do more to share this with external audiences," she said.

In closing, Curtis announced a new alumni video series that will feature alumni of all ages detailing their experiences at Indiana State and how they contributed to their success after graduation.

"In the nine months I have been here, I have met so many successful alumni who have, in part, attributed their success to their experiences at Indiana State. Their stories are our calling card, and I am excited about sharing them with the world," she said.

The alumni series, titled Forever Blue, can be accessed at indstate.edu/foreverblue. New videos will be added as completed.