



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

JOHN W. MOORE

APRIL 1996

Dear Colleagues:

Indiana State University's long-standing tradition of excellence in teaching and its philosophy of student-centered education — both undergraduate and graduate — have made the University a distinctive public institution of higher education in the state of Indiana and beyond.

Additionally, the successes that we have enjoyed as an institution and that our alumni have realized as ISU students and in their subsequent careers are directly attributable to the strong commitment we have made to these two important facets of the University's identity and mission.

Further, there is universal agreement among the University's several constituencies — faculty, alumni, students, and friends — regarding the importance of this tradition and philosophy to the present and future well-being of Indiana State University. Therefore, it is imperative that our concern with and dedication to

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teaching and learning not only be solidified for today's students but that steps be taken, as well, to ensure that our commitment to them remains strong as we consider what tomorrow's students will require of us.

Our challenge in achieving these things is made keener by the presence of several environmental factors such as: limited public resources, the increasing diversity of students seeking access to higher education, the necessity of containing the cost of college attendance, the demand for measuring the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and the growing public insistence on cost-effectiveness in the

expenditure of public funds.

In pursuit of the achievement of the goal of enhancing teaching and learning, the University is currently exploring a number of relevant strategies and has undertaken several initiatives and projects in this direction.

In the remainder of this letter, it is my intention to report to you on the status of the progress we have made as we strive to enhance teaching and learning at Indiana State and become an exemplary university in this regard. In doing so, I hope, as well, to focus attention on areas where more work still needs to be done and to stimulate discussion about new and additional ways in which we can enhance teaching and learning at Indiana State University.

I also want to thank everyone who has contributed to this effort for their dedication, hard work, and commitment to making teaching and learning our highest priority at Indiana State University.

Student Outcomes Assessment

One of the strategies we have embraced as a way to enhance teaching and learning is devising and implementing the means to assess students' achievement throughout their academic careers.

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Our efforts to assess student outcomes will affect students and faculty alike in a number of ways. For faculty, it will provide, among other things, a meaningful and extensive data base to consult in their efforts to improve the undergraduate educational experience for Indiana State's students. This information can be used to identify program strengths as well as areas for needed growth and development. For students, it will mean that the overall quality of our programs will be improved in a number of different ways.

I am pleased to report that in July 1995 we received notification that the North Central Association for Colleges and Schools had approved the University's Student Outcomes Assessment Plan. So well-received was our plan by the NCA that we were one of three institutions invited by the NCA to participate in a panel discussion concerning assessment in general education held at last year's National Assessment Conference in Boston.

The recognition that this plan has received is eloquent testimony to the thought and work invested in it by faculty from throughout the campus and those individuals who serve on the Assessment Advisory Committee. Another of the plan's outstanding attributes is its comprehensive nature as 143 different programs submitted assessment plans in an impressive display of our academic variety and diversity.

During the current academic year, the Assessment Advisory Committee (AAC) has concentrated its efforts in three areas. These are:

- Financially supporting program implementation of plans;
- Supporting continuing education about the role of assessment in improving the quality of academic programs; and
- Improving communication among campus academic programs concerning successful assessment strategies.

Ultimately, funds were allocated to support these efforts, which to date have been used to:

- Provide support for implementation grants to 23 academic programs during the fall semester.
- Support the attendance of 34 faculty at the November 1995 regional assessment conference in Indianapolis.
- Produce a bi-monthly newsletter through which general information about assessment information and successful assessment strategies can be shared.

Additional funds have been earmarked for a second round of implementation grants this semester.

The 2nd Annual Summer Assessment Workshop will be held this year from May 20-23 and will focus

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on assessment methodologies. The workshop provides summer stipends for participants as a way of assisting programs and departments in moving toward implementation of their assessment plans. Implementation grant recipients will share results of their ongoing assessment projects during the workshop.

The AAC is presently completing a proposal for a Center for Assessment that would support faculty and academic program assessment efforts.

The academic programs which are developing assessment plans are at various stages in the process of development and implementation of those plans. All program assessment plans should be fully implemented by the 1997-98 academic year in preparation for the next NCA visit.

First-Year Experience

As a way of ensuring that our students succeed while at Indiana State and believing that, in many ways, preparation is the key to excellence in performance, we have designed and implemented a first-year student experience which will introduce entering students to the community of learning and prepare them to fully realize their talents and abilities.

During the past two years, the First-Year Experience Committee, in conjunction with the staff of the Student Academic Services Center, has developed a new two-credit hour course for entering students — University 101 ("Learning in the University Community") — that is designed to assist students in making the adjustments necessary to enjoy a successful transition to life as a college student both in and out of the classroom. It is the intent of this course to help new students understand how the University functions and how they can successfully function within it.

The course focuses on introducing participants to the concepts and values of a University education, liberal studies, and preparation in the disciplines; fostering within them a sense of tradition, community, and diversity; developing their critical thinking and other academic and personal skills necessary for

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success; and providing an introduction to the resources and services of the University.

Materials for this course have been developed by a subcommittee of the First-Year Experience Committee and include a history of Indiana State University, a history of the Terre Haute community, and folk narratives from both the University and the surrounding community, which are found in the Indiana State University Folklore Archives.

These materials, in addition to a study skills text and a book of essays about life in southern Indiana, make up the readings for the class. These materials serve a dual purpose. They have been selected not only to foster the academic skills of entering students but to introduce them to the communities — academic and local — of which they have now become a part.

In accordance with the aims of Indiana State's General Education Program and the intent of the course to build skills for success, students in University 101 write essays, keep journals on assigned topics, engage in a team project, make class presentations, visit various campus facilities, attend presentations and programs on campus, and compile a portfolio of their work for the term.

The course was offered for credit for the first time this academic year, and, although it is open to any University student, it is required only for conditionally admitted students and all entering student-athletes. The fact that this course is taught by faculty and administrators on a voluntary basis — they take on this responsibility in addition to their regular duties — says a great deal about the dedication of our faculty and staff and their interest in seeing Indiana State's students succeed. These individuals go through an orientation program, and their input into the continuing development of the course is constantly sought so that it can be revised in ways that will help us best meet the needs of our newest students.

Additionally, the First-Year Experience Committee and the Student Academic Services Center have developed the Supplemental Instruction Program as a way of helping students succeed in courses in which there is a higher-than-usual failure rate.

Through this program, a program assistant is assigned to each of these courses. This assistant is an upper-class student or, occasionally, a graduate student who is chosen by the instructor of the course. The SI assistant works closely with the instructor, attends every class meeting to take notes and do the assignments, and then holds three study sessions each week.

After three semesters of this program, we have found that students who participate in these study

sessions achieve a mean grade in the course that is one-half a grade-point higher than the mean grade of those who do not participate. This is exactly the national average for other such programs.

In order to address the needs of prospective college students, the SASC has developed two new summer programs, each of two weeks' duration. One of the programs is intended for participants in the statewide 21st Century Scholars Program and the other is for conditionally admitted students at ISU.

The Summer Seminar for 21st Century Scholars invites 50 high school students from this program to the ISU campus for an academic enrichment experience. The program is intended to introduce these

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students to life in a collegiate environment and to foster confidence in their ability to succeed in post-secondary education. The program's two weeks are devoted to writing and producing a 21st Century Scholars magazine and developing an oral presentation of some of their written work and excerpts from folk literature.

We're excited about having this opportunity to provide an introduction to college life and Indiana State for these future collegians, and look forward to helping them succeed.

Success Through Early Preparation (STEP), the summer program for conditionally admitted students, is an optional program held just prior to the beginning of the fall term. It is designed to provide an in-depth academic orientation for students who wish additional help and support in making the transition to collegiate life.

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Students who elect to participate in this program take non-credit basic courses in math, study skills, composition, and computing in order to strengthen their performance in these areas in a non-competitive setting. They are also introduced to campus facilities and services and meet with representatives of Student Life Programs and Financial Aid.

The experience also allows these students to work closely with their academic advisers on an individual basis and to form a support group before the start of the academic year — a time which, as we all know, can be hectic and overwhelming.

Center for Teaching and Learning

With the establishment of the Center for Teaching and Learning at Indiana State we believe we now possess a tremendous vehicle for promoting effective teaching, continued faculty development, and the highest quality learning experience for ISU students.

These things the Center seeks to accomplish by:

- Assisting individuals, programs, and departments in assessment and development of pedagogical strategies
- Providing workshops designed to enhance specific teaching skills for faculty, adjunct instructors, and teaching assistants
- Developing synergistic relationships with existing campus resources
- Providing assistance to new educators to campus
- Providing support in addressing special teaching/learning needs
- Supporting the use of new technologies in classrooms
- Serving as a clearinghouse for information about activities, events, resources, and projects related to the enhancement of teaching and learning
- Acquiring and distributing grant moneys for new course development, exploration of innovative

teaching methods, and/or research in creative pedagogy.

Last year, funding was identified for a base budget for the Teaching and Learning Center. At that time, a Search and Screen Committee for a Center director and an Advisory Committee for the Center also were established.

Terrence W. O'Connor, who is a professor of education, educational leadership, and administration/foundations, ultimately was selected as director of the Center. The campus was formally introduced to the Center at an open house on April 4 of last year.

Thanks to the efforts of the Advisory Committee, the Center was able to have an almost immediate impact as several summer institutes and workshops were held.

The "Student Outcomes Assessment Workshop" provided information and hands-on experiences to assist departments in the development of effective student outcomes assessment programs.

A workshop on "Approaches to Student Advisement" provided faculty with insight into developmental approaches to student advisement. Various workshop activities also helped participants clarify their own perceptions of advisement.

At the "Improving Your Classroom" workshop, participants discussed various methods of student learning with emphasis being placed on developing strategies for assessing teaching effectiveness. Then, this group collaborated to design the next steps in improving classrooms at Indiana State.

"Using the Information Infrastructure" proved to be a popular program. It was designed for both the beginner and more experienced faculty and focused on assisting faculty in identifying ways they could apply current technologies to their teaching. Participants chose workshop tracks with a particular focus or stand-alone sessions.

In "Teaching Large Classrooms," 13 faculty who usually teach large classes discussed topics unique to their respective classrooms such as student learning styles and large class environments, alternatives to the standard lecture, and teaching styles and goals in large class environments.

This fall, Professor O'Connor joined others in welcoming new faculty to the ISU community and offered a session on "Teaching Tips for New Faculty" during New Faculty Orientation. A *New Faculty Handbook*, which included sections on "Life as a New College Teacher," "Knowing the Fundamentals of Teaching," and "How to Improve Your Teaching," as well as a listing of campus resources, also was given to each new faculty member. In December new faculty were the Center's guests at a luncheon during which

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the Center's role and function were discussed.

The Center, in cooperation with the School of Graduate Studies, sponsored a graduate teaching assistant orientation. As a result, a heightened awareness of teaching assistants' support became apparent. A *Teaching Assistant Handbook*, which gave new graduate assistants a historical background of the campus, contained a number of teaching tips, described campus resources, and listed phone number for teaching assistants and faculty participants' extension numbers. Many teaching assistants requested the opportunity to have on-going discussions

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about effective instruction. Once again, the Center opened its doors to a cadre of scholars seeking to enhance their classroom environments, and, as a result, bi-monthly meetings are held in the Center which focus specifically on the teaching assistant experience from a pedagogical perspective.

The Center, together with the Faculty Senate, the Deans Council, the Student Government Association, and the Office of Academic Affairs, co-sponsored a national teleconference on academic dishonesty. Strategies were discussed on how to discourage academic dishonesty; many of those strategies, faculty acknowledged, could be incorporated immediately into their own classrooms.

The Center also hosted an open house for adjunct faculty during which a panel of experienced adjunct faculty shared some of their classroom experiences and how they had dealt with certain challenges. Each participant also was given a handbook for part-time faculty. The open house enabled the Center to communicate the services and support it could offer part-time faculty and represented an opportunity for faculty and administration to acknowledge the contribution that part-time faculty make to the ISU community.

The cooperative nature of the Center and the importance that faculty are placing on its work is evident in the assistance that many of the recipients

of the Caleb Mills Award for Teaching Excellence provided in support of specific Center initiatives during its first year of existence.

The Center for Teaching and Learning has also hosted discipline-specific activities. Peter Carino, director of the Writing Center, designed a workshop for faculty who require writing from their students but are sometimes disappointed with the results. The workshop dealt with such topics as how to interpret assignments, develop writing topics, and improve writing skills holistically. Todd and Beth Whitaker also shared their experiences using active learning in the classroom.

As a way of welcoming faculty, teaching assistants, and students back from break for the current semester, the Center hosted WinterFest '96. This two-day event offered activities such as incorporating technologies in learning experiences, discussing the legal rights of students with disabilities, examining the leadership role, and numerous other activities.

There are any number of exciting things going on at the Center each day, and I urge all of you to drop by and get to know the people there and what it can offer you in the way of professional development.

Academic Advisement

Improving the quality of academic advising remains a high priority for Indiana State, and the University has undertaken a comprehensive effort to improve the academic advisement of all students.

The importance of showing improvement in this area is underscored by the fact that our students have indicated in recent surveys that relative to other areas on campus, they are dissatisfied with the academic advising they receive. As a way of guiding the University's efforts toward improvement in this area, the Academic Advising Coordinators Group and a subcommittee of the First-Year Experience Committee have developed a "Statement on Academic Advising" for adoption by the University.

This statement reiterates the University's commitment to quality advising, describes the characteristics of good advising, and enumerates the responsibilities of University administrators, advisers, and students in promoting successful educational experiences. It is currently under consideration by faculty and student government, and we hope that it will be adopted as University policy in the near future.

Also under development is an *Academic Advisers' Handbook* which has been prepared by Cathy Baker, Bobbie Bakker, and Doug Timmons and is designed to assist advisers to deliver quality advising. A draft of the *Handbook* is currently available on the ISU Gopher and contains sections on central issues in

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academic advising, the advising process, reference resources, advising special student populations, financial aid, and academic and curricular information. The authors invite your comments concerning content and hope to have the *Handbook* available this summer.

The implementation of DARS (Degree Audit Reporting System) at the University will have a major impact on the quality of advising at the University. DARS is designed to relieve advisers and students of the more routine aspects of scheduling courses and should help to promote a developmental model of academic advising. The first DARS printouts, which will provide up-to-date information concerning the student's academic record and progress toward completing General Education and other degree requirements, will be available for several academic departments this spring. Stacey Thomas is holding a series of workshops to introduce faculty and other advisers to the DARS system.

Computing Resources and Library

As a way of enhancing, expanding, and complementing traditional classroom teaching the University is engaged in a widespread effort to discover and incorporate new and innovative forms of technology in the instructional effort.

Accordingly, I am pleased to report that during the fall semester, Academic Computing and Networking Services created a Faculty Computing Resource Center to assist faculty with the application and integration of computers and networks into their instruction and research.

The Center also has developed a close working relationship with the Center for Teaching and Learning as these two entities seek to achieve this mutual goal. For example, a year-long seminar is being offered for 22 faculty to introduce them to technological innovations and pedagogical issues raised by adopting technologies for instructional use. The goals of the project are to create model classroom applications across disciplinary fields and to develop faculty leaders who can serve as a resource for their colleagues.

In addition, two new computer laboratories were created this fall, adding 40 new state-of-the-art computers for students. These facilities, together with the highly successful Student Computing Center, represent a tremendous educational resource for our students.

As the University remodels its residence halls, Telecommunications Services is rewiring individual rooms so that students with their own computers will have access to the network right from the rooms.

The library faculty have developed and are offering several different sessions on how to navigate the Internet and World Wide Web. These programs are being offered to the Vigo County School Corporation's media specialists, principals, and teachers, as well as ISU faculty and staff.

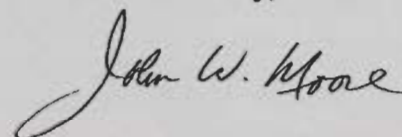
Our full realization of these — and other — goals associated with the continuation of Indiana State's distinctive philosophy of education is critical to the institution's future. This fact is made abundantly clear when one realizes the number of crucial areas that will be positively impacted by our continued progress in this area. These include:

- Improving the academic success of our students
- Expanding the appeal of the University to prospective students
- Increasing the University's academic reputation
- Enhancing the career opportunities of the University's graduates
- Broadening and strengthening the University's base of financial support by the government and the citizens of Indiana.

I also want to stress that this undertaking is an evolutionary process which will require our constant review and revision. Consequently, we owe the past, the present, and the future nothing less than our continued commitment and dedication to the enhancement of teaching and learning at Indiana State. There's simply too much at stake to do otherwise.

I look forward to continuing our work together in this important area.

Sincerely,



John W. Moore