



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

JOHN W. MOORE

APRIL 1997

Dear Colleagues,

Our awareness of the criteria by which we will be judged as an institution of higher education could not be any clearer: Our success will be determined by the quality of our students' experiences in our classrooms and laboratories. Whatever we achieve in terms of attracting students, enhancing funding, improving our organization, or developing our campus, the strength of the University will depend, ultimately, on how successful we are in terms of creating relevant and meaningful learning experiences.

The forces presently altering American society are having a profound impact on America's institutions of higher education. Dynamic trends such as advancing technology, the globalization of the marketplace, and changing demographics have created a situation in which new skills and new ways of thinking are needed for success. Students, now more than ever, must be prepared to cross cultural boundaries, employ technologically advanced tools, embrace various learning styles and techniques, learn efficiently and effectively, and think flexibly if they are to succeed. This is true not only while they are in school but in their subsequent careers as well.

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Yet, the old ways are no longer adequate to prepare students to succeed in such a socio-economic environment. As a result, we must develop and embrace new approaches, new methods, and new tools for teaching and learning. Above all, our endeavors in these areas must be relevant to and based in the world as it now exists. We also must understand that the most effective way for us to teach and our students to learn these things is by embodying and integrating them into the learning process itself. Consequently, activities in our classrooms, laboratories, and advising sessions will have to facilitate students' growth in these new skill and knowledge areas. Students, parents, community leaders, and government leaders will not be

satisfied by public higher education that fails to provide such experiences.

Our challenge in the area of teaching and learning is made even more acute by the fact that while expecting more from the university, society is also demanding that more people be successful at the university. Modernization continues to raise the minimal qualifications necessary for economic and social success. A university education has shifted from being a privilege for few to an expectation for many. We must adopt new approaches to teaching and learning that will enable us to communicate with students from a wide range of social and ethnic backgrounds and of varying academic preparation. Once again, the fundamental relationship between teacher and student will determine

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

how well we succeed.

I believe there is good reason to expect that ISU not only will meet these challenges but that it will play a leading role in the process. Our proud heritage as a teaching institution will provide a powerful foundation upon which to build for the future. Teaching will remain central to our mission as a university and our approach to teaching will continue to be innovative and results-oriented. Our historic role as an opportunity university also provides us with certain advantages in this regard. Our low student-faculty ratio creates conditions in which faculty and students can interact more closely, and our tradition of rigorous academic preparation will remain strong.

To meet present and future challenges we will need to extend these traditions into the twenty-first century and re-dedicate ourselves to making ISU a true learning community.

CURRENT EFFORTS

An appeal to excellence in teaching means little if we don't also define how it should shape our actions. To accomplish this, we need first to discuss this issue among ourselves. With colleagues, in our own departments and across the Schools and the College, we should clarify — and expand — our vision of good teaching and learning. We should share our successes and solicit feedback on our experiments. Where there is rich dialogue — discussions that engage our experiences with existing scholarship on college pedagogy — we can expect to find good practice.

To date, the campus has undertaken a number of projects that have brought together faculty, students, and staff to explore the personal and technical dimensions of teaching and learning for today. One such project was the Diversity and Democracy Project that was concluded last spring after two years of team discussions, scholarly study, and experiments. Twenty-eight faculty and 12 students examined ways to transform General Education courses so that they better reflect the nature and needs of our pluralistic society. This project became a leading effort in the American Association of Colleges and University's "American Commitments" program. Classrooms were transformed, research has been published, and a base of knowledge and experience has been built that makes ISU a regional leader in transforming academic settings so that they effectively incorporate American diversity.

This year a dozen additional faculty, students,

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and staff have continued this effort through the Diversity and Pedagogy Project. This on-going program supports teams drawn from across campus as they work to define the kinds of practices that will model for our students the responsibilities we share in a pluralistic democracy.

We also have supported faculty who have agreed to take on pedagogical leadership in bringing technology into our learning environments. In addition to expanding our computing facilities, we have supported the Teaching with Technology Project in which 20 faculty spent a year looking at designing and developing technological applications based on pedagogical scholarship. There have been some exciting successes and some lessons learned. A second group recently took up the search for appropriate ways to bring computers to the aid of student learning.

Our successes and approaches have not been limited to these projects. The Academic Computing and Network Services, the library faculty, and the Faculty Computing Resource Center have sponsored numerous workshops to educate the campus community about new technologies and their potential uses. Individuals have used their own initiative to bring our community into the information age. Tom Derrick (English), Dennis Bialaszewski and

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Billy Moates (Systems and Decision Sciences), Tom Steiger (Sociology), Larry Reck and Susan Powers (Curriculum, Instruction, and Media Technology), Tim Mulkey (Life Sciences), and Steve Gabany (Health and Safety) are among the faculty members who have explored innovative uses of Internet technologies in their courses.

There are other initiatives that show a determination to develop and embrace teaching that meets the challenges of today's world. The School of Education's involvement in the Urban Network to Improve Teacher Education project created teams to consider methods by which teachers are prepared for urban environments. As the School begins to revamp its programs, it is reaping the rewards of three years of study and exploration. In addition, Sharon Andrews (Elementary and Early Childhood Education) brought together 11 faculty from the School of Education and the College of Arts and Sciences through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Together they worked with public school teachers to examine how to connect the lessons from our democratic heritage to classroom practices. This rich collaboration altered our classrooms at ISU as much as those in the public schools.

Through the Wabash Valley Educational Alliance, Peter Wright (Industrial Technology Education) has engaged faculty in a National Science Foundation (NSF) project on problem-based learning. Also through an NSF grant, the Physics Department is working to integrate theory and practice courses in a way that will make active learning the new norm. In the last two months we also have begun a significant initiative to establish a Service Learning program that links the campus to the local community through applied academic projects.

The Center for Teaching and Learning has provided a number of programs and services to help initiate dialogue about teaching and learning on the campus. From Developmental Advising to Servant Leadership to Improving Classrooms, ISU faculty have been involved in professional seminars and workshops concerned with improving classroom environments and teaching practices. This past January the Center's campus conference, Winterfest '97, provided faculty and students the opportunity to exchange ideas on a variety of relevant subjects in more than 60 sessions held over three days. The highlight of the conference were presentations by two

nationally recognized scholars in the field of teaching and learning. Altogether the conference provided an unprecedented opportunity for growth and development in this geographic region.

Under Arlene Bakutes' direction, the Center for Teaching and Learning has put into place a comprehensive program that integrates department and university efforts to help graduate teaching assistants become effective educators. There is also an

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exciting new program, found in only a few places in the country, where undergraduate students, led by junior Laura Wolk, serve as consultants for faculty seeking to understand and improve their teaching. We also have begun offering opportunities for new faculty members, part-time instructors, and academic administrators to meet and share ideas. In short, we are getting more people together to talk about how to improve teaching and learning at our institution than ever before.

COMING EVENTS

Even with all we have accomplished towards enhancing teaching and learning at ISU, much

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

remains to be done. Several new initiatives promise to extend the campus's record of success in this area.

Student success and persistence continue to be high priorities. The university is actively pursuing a \$2 million grant from the Lilly Foundation that would allow us to consolidate our best practices and adopt select initiatives from across the country into a program designed to help first-year students realize their potential. Your suggestions on how this grant can best be used by the campus will be sought during this month as we seek to determine how to use the \$50,000 in planning funds that have been provided. I urge you to take advantage of this opportunity to contribute your thoughts toward what promises to be a major commitment to turning our students' first year into an environment where they learn how to succeed.

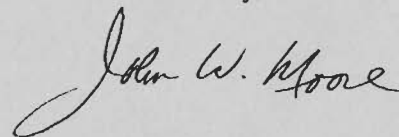
We also recognize the need to reach out beyond our immediate geographic area. Through the Degree Link partnership that we are developing with IVY Tech State College and Vincennes University, we are engaged in an innovative initiative to provide baccalaureate completion programs in approximately 20 work force related fields at sites around the state. We have already begun a comprehensive faculty development program, the Course Transformation Academy. Currently, 33 faculty are engaged in a semester-long program to help them develop quality instructional environments through media and pedagogy. Discussions regarding curriculum, staffing, technical, and administrative factors are on-going. We expect that the equipment, training, and experiences

from this involvement will have a powerful, positive impact on the entire campus.

CONCLUSION

As we face the challenges that come with adapting our academic traditions to meet the demands of a changing society, we will continue to draw upon our heritage as a university known for its commitment to teaching. To be successful, we will have to demonstrate our capacity to adapt our ideas and methods of teaching and learning as creatively and thoughtfully as anywhere in the country. Through an exciting array of initiatives I am confident we will energize the teaching and learning functions on our campus, and, in the process, will create opportunities for students to learn in still unforeseen ways. Based on ISU's history, would anyone expect otherwise?

Sincerely,



John W. Moore