

September 26, 2011

Dear colleagues,

Benchmark data for the second year of the strategic plan are slowly coming in as we move toward the October 15 deadline. As expected, most of the results are positive with enrollment and four-year graduation rates leading the way. It is gratifying to see progress on both of these fronts.

Unfortunately, we continue to struggle with first-year retention. The retention rate across all groups, with the exception of a small improvement in 21st Century Scholars, declined this year. The broad nature of the decline and its severity (dropping from 63% to 58%) would imply that the continued bad economy is a significant factor, but it is too early in the analysis to draw any definitive conclusions. As the analysis proceeds over the next few weeks, the focus will be on how to reverse the trend rather than looking for blame.

I appreciate the hard work of many people across the campus to engage our students. I am more and more convinced that engagement of students in their education and their University will lead to the results that we seek. However, it is important to carefully measure what types of engagement are the most valuable. We also need to involve more of the campus community in the effort. Retention is not just an issue for Student Affairs or those directly involved in our Student Success and Engagement activities but rather it needs to be a focus of attention by every department, academic and administrative, and every employee.

I am confident we can change the outcome by developing an expectation of success and by each of us making a personal commitment to the success of our students. We will continue to have two broad strategic initiatives:

1. Work to better identify students prior to enrollment who not only have the intellectual ability and academic preparedness to succeed at ISU but also the “desire and ability to persevere.”
2. Develop the programs and efforts needed to improve students’ chances of success once they are enrolled.

By adjusting our tactics as we learn more about the factors contributing to student success, we will meet our goals. Thank you for your dedicated work and commitment to our students. As a reminder, I will be providing a preliminary report on the progress made against our benchmarks during my fall address which will take place at 3 p.m. Wednesday, October 5, in Tilson Music Hall. A campus-wide reception will follow.

A more comprehensive review of progress against benchmark data will occur November 17 and 18 when the initiative teams will provide an overview of their work. In preparation, fact/benchmark sheets are currently being developed for each initiative to provide a uniform way to easily describe this work and the data related to it. Five teams are serving as pilots for this project, and their fact/benchmark sheets will be posted to the strategic planning website (www.indstate.edu/strategicplan) by next Monday. These examples will aid the remaining teams in the development of their fact/benchmark sheets with a desired completion date of October 28. That will provide ample time for the information to be reviewed by campus stakeholders prior to the November 17 and 18 presentations. While the schedule has not

been finalized, it is likely that Goals 1 and 2 will be presented on November 17 with Goals 3 through 6 along with the Partnership initiatives taking place on November 18. These presentations will occur in Tirey Hall.

Other items I would like to share:

- Congratulations to Coach Trent Miles and the Sycamore football team for defeating Youngstown State for the first time in our stadium. It was great to see the support the team received from our students and the community. The stadium grounds were filled with activity prior to kickoff including a fundraiser conducted by the Ryves Community Optimist Club to benefit the Ryves Youth Center. Saturday was also Family Day and our students and their families enjoyed an array of activities that stretched throughout the day thanks to a significant increase in community partnerships organized by the staff in Student Affairs. The Bayh College of Education, Networks Financial Institute, the School of Music and the College of Nursing, Health, and Human Services also provided special programs for siblings as part of the Family Day activities. Thanks to everyone involved.
- Plans are underway to make this year's Homecoming bigger and better than ever. The Homecoming Committee has secured Top 40 music act Mike Posner and the Brain Trust to headline a Homecoming Concert at 9 p.m. Saturday, October 15, at Hulman Center. Tickets, \$8 for students and \$12 for the general public, go on sale at 10 a.m. tomorrow at Hulman Center's box office or online at www.ticketmaster.com.
- Indiana State has another national champion among its students! Solly Burton, a 20-year-old junior from Graysville, is the 2011 National Mandolin Champion. A music business major, Solly also won this competition in 2007, the only other time he entered. Congratulations to this talented Sycamore.
- Earlier this year, a contest to identify obstacles that hinder our students' ability to succeed was announced, and several of you submitted entries. Unfortunately, a computer glitch resulted in the files being lost. The contest is now reopened, and everyone is encouraged to submit their ideas (including the ones submitted earlier). What kinds of processes, paperwork, policies, etc. exist that become unnecessary hurdles for our students? Obviously, some are necessary evils. However, there are some that could be streamlined or eliminated. Send your ideas to president@indstate.edu.
- The University Speakers Series will kick off its season next Tuesday (October 4) with an address by central Watergate figure John Dean. He recounted his days as President Richard Nixon's White House lawyer in the books *Blind Ambition* and *Lost Honor*. His speech, which is free and open to the public, will begin at 7 p.m. in Tilson Music Hall in Tirey Hall.
- Amy Taylor, a student services assistant in the Office of Extended Learning, was also the recipient of a scholarship from the Staff Council. Congratulations, Ann!
- Twelve proposals have been submitted for consideration for the Unbounded Possibilities program. Within the next month, an external panel of university leaders will come to campus to review the proposals and provide recommendations in a parallel process to the internal review committees. An announcement of the programs selected for Unbounded Possibilities designation and funding will be made by November 30.
- Susan Miles, who works with our 21st Century Scholar program, has been selected to round out the 2011-2012 Leadership ISU class. This year's program got underway earlier this month. Good luck to all of the class members for an informative and productive year.

- On Thursday, September 29, Mandy Reid will present a program focused on how author Louisa May Alcott used her writing to address social reforms including abolition and women's rights. The program will begin at 7 p.m. in the Library Events Area at Cunningham Memorial Library. It is part of a series of events sponsored by Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, ISU, the Library Consortium of Vigo County, Arts Illiana, National Endowment for the Arts, Indiana Humanities Council, Indiana Landmarks, and the Indiana Arts Commission. A complete schedule of the Louisa May Alcott events is available at: <http://www.smwc.edu/headlines/louisa-may-alcott-the-woman-behind-little-women/>.

Have a great week!

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Bradley
President