



# THE PATHWAY TO SUCCESS

## THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF INDIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

### GOAL ONE:

### INCREASE ENROLLMENT AND STUDENT SUCCESS



**Indiana State  
University**

*More. From day one.*

**Initiative:** 1      **Initiative Title:** Achieve greater impact on student success through residential life

### Introduction

Student success is related to nearly every aspect of university function. In terms of the on-campus experience, the establishment of a comfortable and stimulating “home”, in terms of the physical living environment, as well as the social and intellectual community of peers within that environment, is a central and constant contributor to the student experience. Thus, the progressive and sustained enhancement of housing is a high priority for Indiana State University. Although considerable progress has been made in the improvement of residence life at ISU, by updating older and outdated facilities and by selective development of programming, the provision of quality, modern housing, staffed by well-trained and supportive personnel and linked to engaging, holistic programming, remains an area for substantial intervention. These factors, because of the fact that they pervade student life and connect its various pieces, can make a powerful impact on student retention and persistence.

### Purpose

Creating a unique, distinct environment for first-year students at ISU would transform the university experience, persistence and graduation of one of ISU’s most vulnerable groups. The residential village would provide structured opportunities for first-year students to engage with academic content in the residence halls, including interaction with faculty, advisors and other expert staff, and also to build community and personal relationships with their fellow students. These students would feel an immediate connection to the ISU experience. The specific purposes of the First Year Residential Village are to:

- Improve persistence and retention rates of first-year students, serving to raise graduation rates,
- Bridge learning from the classroom to the living environment by providing meaningful opportunities for leadership and engagement with academic course concepts in-co-curricular and residence settings,
- Upgrade or replace outmoded residence halls with quality housing.

### Methods

- Increase number and redefine the role of student staff (ongoing).
  - Have implemented a nationally recognized housing assessment program (the EBI Residential Life Assessment).
  - Hire Associate Director to coordinate themed housing, develop programming, liaison with faculty (completed January 2011).
  - Increase Area Director Position to 12 month position (completed July 2010).
  - Develop a Campus Residential Life Advisory Board, site visit, planning conference (ongoing, effective 2010).
  - Review and develop new Residential Life web-page (ongoing).
- Integrate APA function with University College (ongoing).
- Utilize faculty partners for residence hall service learning projects (ongoing).

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## **Discussion**

The initiative implementation continues and has involved the successful completion/introduction of all initiatives set-forth thus far. The distribution of a national resident assessment survey is the capstone of our efforts; establishing national benchmarks for the Residential Life Office. Initiative implementation during the first two years consisted of the restructuring, re-alignment and specific focus to staff, maintain and establish a residential life organization determined to improve student success and retention. Subsequently, the initiative has focused on solidifying and growing partnerships with faculty involved with academic theme housing; while at the same time expanding the scope and programming within the themed housing program.

Continuing with the initiatives, the distribution and data collection from the EBI- National Resident Assessment survey, along with the data from the MAP-Works survey, is supporting ISU's development of national benchmarks needed to determine future directions and refinements of the residence hall program. Additionally data have been, and continue to be, collected to determine the impact academic theme housing has on the retention of first-year students.

The successful implementation of initiative goals focused on departmental structure (hiring new staff, including an academically focused executive director, refining position descriptions, strengthening faculty partnerships, advancing academic theme housing and involvement with construction projects, etc...). These efforts established the foundation for the distribution of the national benchmark survey which launched in Spring 2012. This was the first national survey distributed to residential students gathering data specifically for advancing discussions on residential living and the impact on-campus living has on student success. The utilization of that data has guided changes and improvements within Residential Life and a follow-up survey is to be launched in Spring 2014.

## **Summary**

The strategic plan implementation team has been successful with the development, implementation and future direction of the proposed initiative. These accomplishments include significant renovation and improvement of facilities, expansion in the number and role of professional and student staff, and initial analysis and of best practices within the ISU setting and at model institution. Representatives of existing housing themes are rethinking their approach to co-curriculum within the residence halls and increasing their collaboration with faculty and staff in other themes regarding programming and assessment. The first wave of intensive assessment is guiding further changes in housing themes, programming and facilities.

## **Initiative Chair(s) and Contact Information**

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