

2016 Strategic Plan Key Question Committee – Final Report

Question: *What are our programs of distinction and how do we make them stronger and recognized externally to raise the overall awareness of the academic excellence of ISU?*

Members (* = committee chair):

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- ***Greg Bierly**, Executive Director, University Honors Program and Professor, College of Arts and Sciences
- Bram Blackwell, student, Scott College of Business
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Summary:

The committee developed an understanding of “distinctive” for its work; principally, that distinctive academic programs would be those through which the university could achieve distinction from its peers in an effort to attract, enroll and prepare students for rewarding careers and lives, and advanced study. We then used a variety of criteria to establish the viability, success, potential and marketability of academic programs and make recommendations for select programs to receive enhanced marketing. We present the rationale for these selections and initial recommendations for marketing and resources below.

Key Findings Summary

Key Finding 1	The university should increase emphasis on program-based marketing to “own” certain subject and prospective employment areas. This shift in marketing emphasis should complement and blend into our current efforts dedicated to cross-cutting themes (community engagement, experiential learning) and university traits (access to faculty, student success focus).
Key Finding 2	On the basis of a variety of criteria discussed within, the committee recommends that five programs and program clusters (which have a strong convergence of marketability factors) should receive enhanced attention in forthcoming marketing campaigns: The programs are: Unmanned Systems; Genomic Advocacy, Nursing, Teacher Education and Business.
Key Finding 3	The university should assist in coordination and marketing of multiple

	community-oriented clinical health services operated by multiple academic colleges.
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Recommended Actions Summary

Recommended Action 1	Develop marketing campaigns to promote the distinctive programs
Recommended Action 2	Allocate marketing budget to promote the distinctive programs through paid media
Recommended Action 3	Promote some of the faces behind the distinctive programs through content marketing.
Recommended Action 4	Develop a recruitment plan for the distinctive programs.
Recommended Action 5	Market coordinated community health initiatives and services.
Recommended Action 6	Request all distinctive programs submit a plan for student success and support.

Background:

As a component of its two most recent strategic plans, Indiana State University has attempted to provide attention and resources to enhance programs of excellence and potential excellence. Over a decade ago, the *Pathways to Preeminence* (President L. Benjamin) plan challenged the campus community to, among other goals, identify and support *programs of distinction and promise*, with the reasoning that a targeted investment in selected programs would generate an especially large return in recruitment, retention and completion prowess for the University, and would promote and stimulate institutional excellence in the areas of scholarship and funding. Programs were selected by the planning committee and administrators and evaluated through an annual review framework. The context for this effort was the development of two other key pillars of university emphasis (each represented by major strategic initiatives: experiential learning and community engagement. In 2009, with the university's focus and reputation in these areas established, the Unbounded Possibilities (UP) initiative emerged from the *Pathway to Success* (President D. Bradley) strategic plan. Although the initial "emphasis on programs" aspect of what was to become UP in the *Pathway to Success* plan was similar to its predecessor, this initiative identified, through a competitive proposal process, programs that emphasized innovation, collaboration (across defined program and academic unit boundaries), and adherence to the engagement identity of the institution, as well as economic development in Terre Haute and the region. Proposers were encouraged to think beyond traditional program boundaries and thus finding was not tied to divisional silos. Continuing support was provided to these programs on the basis of their success in achieving proposed goals, and well as their ability to become self-sustaining through benefit to the university.

In the context of these previous initiatives and their plans, both of which identified a series of programs (or elicited the creation of programs), and the environment of national recognition and achieved excellence in community engagement, our committee was charged with reexamining the question of *which programs are distinctive at Indiana State*, and to propose strategies for marketing and enhancing them.

Analysis Methods:

The committee identified several key challenges related to the charge: Fundamentally: How should a distinctive program be defined (i.e., what constitutes “distinctiveness”), and 2) which criteria should be used to assess and compare programs?

The committee considered multiple types of distinction or excellence, namely: 1) programs of traditional reputation, excellence and success, with validation in the form of history, awards and positioning as a known “destination” for prospective majors; 2) programs that have demonstrated exceptional strength in scholarship and/or student success, and 3) programs that have a large potential for future success on the basis of disciplinary position, emergent trends, the job market and student demand. Further, the committee determined that certain “bundles” of programs would be suitable for marketing, across disciplinary lines, but within certain core themes, such as community engagement.

It is clear that this is a highly subjective exercise, as no programs examined were superior across all criteria. Additionally, assignment of primacy of any particular criterion over the others is also subjective. Finally, because the committee was charged with identifying a small number of programs with a broad set of criteria, many programs that are exceptional across multiple categories were not included for additional marketing emphasis. In some cases, successful and/or well-enrolled units were not recommended because it was not apparent how additional attention or resources to those programs would grow them further or better establish distinction for the university.

Criteria: The committee assembled a robust set of criteria for describing and evaluating programs. Variables and dimensions include:

- **Academic program** – The program must exist as, or be a component of, a major, minor, certification or degree emphasis (undergraduate or graduate). This was deemed appropriate in order to shift the marketing emphasis with this plan from the promotion of general university strengths and traits toward academic opportunities for students.
- **Capacity** – Does the program have the capacity for increased enrollment or marketing attention? Would the program’s capacity be increased or improved with additional resources and marketing? If a program is already quite successful, would additional resources make an impact in enabling the program to recruit or serve additional students?
- **Marketability** – What are the prospects for successfully presenting this program through a marketing campaign? Does the program hold any particular visual or narrative advantage as a marketing subject? Is the program an area of keen student interest as shown by enrollment size, inquiries or survey results?
- **Uniqueness and emergence** – How unique is the program in the context of regional or state competitor institutions? Does the program address an unusual or cutting edge niche area? What is the nature of the program field – is it well-established or does it present a “cutting edge” subject?
- **National accreditation and awards** – Is the program distinguished or externally validated through accreditation or other review? Has the program been recognized with external awards?
- **Placement** – Does the program have documentable success placing students in professional positions, graduate/professional school, or high level internships or practicum (Career Center data)?
- **Retention and graduation rate** – Does the program successfully retain and graduate students (a program lacking in this area may be disqualified from consideration) (Blue Reports data).

- **Contribution to the discipline/industry** – Does the program demonstrably strengthen the workforce by addressing a particular need or producing highly skilled, sought after graduates? Does the program produce exceptional research as shown by publication and funding?

ALL programs selected must satisfy the following:

- Must provide strong experiential learning opportunities for students
- Must feature direct access to faculty and systematically place students in research and practical settings, preferably alongside faculty

In addition to extensive conversations and research by members of the committee representing various aspects of the university, the co-chairs met with the deans of each academic college to discuss the charges and the proposed criteria, and to pose questions about specific programs in light of strategic direction within the college. The committee used its criteria and these conversations to identify a set of programs for marketing and enhancement.

Key Findings and Recommendations:

Recent marketing efforts at Indiana State University have emphasized general thematic areas of the university (e.g., There’s More To Blue) to build a brand identity and communicate the values of the institution (e.g., Blue Is..., There’s More to Blue). These thematic areas, notably community engagement and experiential learning, are areas of historic excellence and contribution, were centerpieces of past strategic planning and marketing efforts, and have been established as the basis of the University’s national recognition and reputation. The values that underlie the institutional strengths in these areas – university connection and commitment to community, the effectiveness of “hands-on” learning, and access to faculty are clearly core elements of Indiana State’s identity and part of its recent success in increasing enrollment.

Our committee concluded that, in the context of these previous planning efforts, and following two program-based initiatives that emphasized either an array of organizational structures (Pathways to Preeminence: Programs of Promise and Distinction) or new/revised interdisciplinary entities or program synergies (Unbounded Possibilities), *our marketing efforts would now be most effective if we also emphasized specific academic programs that students may actually pursue as part of a degree*. That is, students have been presented a rich explanation of why Indiana State is the kind of institution that will enliven their learning and value their interests in service and real-world exposure to disciplinary ideas; *the next logical step in establishment of an identity and strengthening recruitment is to highlight how selected academic programs exemplify these university’s strengths and values*.

1. Distinctive Programs and Rationale: Programs and Program Clusters:

We recommend that the following five programs/program clusters receive enhanced marketing by the university:

Unmanned Systems

- Unmanned (UMS) is a new, leading edge technology that will soon be a significant segment of the aviation and automotive industries. UMS represent new and growing opportunities to the civilian, government and military job markets. By 2025, UMS will be an \$82 billion industry with over 100,000 new jobs created.
- Indiana State is the first university in the Midwest to offer a Bachelor of Science in Unmanned Systems (land, sea and air).
- UMS offers a variety of hands-on, cutting-edge opportunities involving computer hardware/software, design and data analysis. This program is already connected to the Flight Academy and Center for Unmanned Systems and Human Capital Development (an UP center). However, highly synergistic opportunities exist to further cut across multiple departments and engage students and faculty from a wide range of colleges and interests. This, the program is concerned with more than aviation; it is about rethinking the use of technology across all industries.
- The program's connection with Summer Honors provides high school students an opportunity to experience it firsthand.
- UMS offers uniquely visual and exciting marketing opportunities.
- This program was generating interest from prospective students even before it was advertised to the public. Communications and Marketing worked with the Aviation department to launch a mass media campaign this Fall. In less than 60 days, we had over 1,000 unique visitors to the page outlining the major and program of study. So, we believe this is a highly marketable program that can also position Indiana State as a leading technology University.
- A variety of jobs exist for students majoring in UMS. Salaries are on the rise for professionals in this field. National data suggests salaries between \$46,000 – \$145,000 depending on experience and industry.

Genomic Advocacy

- The Center for Genomic Advocacy is an interdisciplinary cluster of initiatives and faculty dedicated to the improvement of genome science and the enhancement and tailoring of health care through genomic information; these efforts have been supported through a successful Unbounded Possibilities grant and via internal, community and national partners. An undergraduate, multidisciplinary minor and a graduate certificate in genomic advocacy (as well as a new master's degree in genetic counseling) are supported by faculty and staff from multiple academic colleges and include the subject areas of biology and environmental science/health, business, applied medicine, philosophy and political science. These programs are relatively new (2013).
- Genomic advocacy is an emergent field with highly diverse application. It engages students and experts from an interdisciplinary enrollment base; thus the potential for student interest and enrollment is high.
- Because of the emergent nature of genome science and its application, students participating in research in the Center and/or completing one of the program options will be well positioned for employment opportunities and progression to advanced study.

- The availability of the Center and its associated programs within a university, and particularly its potential for community engagement through the advocacy component, *establish a unique position for Indiana State* and one well-aligned with its institutional focus.
- The Center has an existing infrastructure and a track record of experiential learning, research and engagement that have been evaluated through the Unbounded Possibilities review process.
- Outreach to prospective students has been formally established through a Summer Honors Program seminar.
- Genomic advocacy has synergy with a larger suite of programs and efforts at ISU, focused on community health, that we have suggested for additional marketing potential (see below).

School of Nursing

- The Nursing Program is a flagship entity at Indiana State University and has been in place since 1963. There are currently more than 1200 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in three nursing departments.
- Graduates from the Baccalaureate Nursing program have extremely strong employment potential; *there are approximately 2000 unfilled nursing positions in Indiana alone.*
- The availability of the baccalaureate degree provides opportunities for graduates to progress to advanced study, administration and leadership in the discipline.
- Multiple, rigorous experiential learning opportunities are central to the training and preparation of nursing students. The Sycamore Nursing Center conducts wellness classes and provides low cost health care for the community from its clinic at Union Hospital in Terre Haute. A true collaboration among faculty, students, the Vigo County School Corporation, and Vigo County Health Department, the center has operated since 1981.
- Nursing students have a high academic success rate; Nursing-Non-designated students are the number one major entering the University Honors Program major
- High school students are able to sample a variety of Nursing-related experiences through the Health Careers seminar.
- The Baccalaureate Nursing program presently accepts 50 students per academic year, in keeping with accreditation requirements pertaining to student-faculty ratio. Additional instructional lines could increase capacity in an in-demand field for the nurse practitioner and on-line degree components.

Bayh College of Education Teacher and Administrator Preparation Programs

- The Bayh College of Education provides a comprehensive and externally recognized set of degree programs, certifications and experiences across the spectrum of career opportunities and educational levels.
- Teacher education is central to Indiana State University's identity and historical legacy. The range of programs and services offered through the Bayh College offers are, and have long been, a central dimension of the university.

- Employment opportunities for teachers and administrators remain extremely high, and the Bayh College is uniquely well-positioned to place its students owing to its state-level leadership and influence in all education-related sub-disciplines.
- The Indiana Principal Leadership Institute is one of the key preparation and professional development entities for educational administrators in the state.
- Multiple, rigorous experiential learning opportunities, in classrooms, labs, and clinics are a core part of the training of students in these programs. The Bayh College's Teachers of Tomorrow Advanced Learning program (TOTAL) provides students a full immersion internship experience that enhances their experiences and understanding of best practices.
- High school students are able to have an early elementary education experiences through an existing Summer Honors seminar.
- The multiple clinical centers within the Bayh College are strongly committed to the community engagement mission and activities of the university, and have a synergy with health-focused programs in other colleges.

Scott College of Business Programs

- The Scott College of Business offers a suite of traditional business majors in a state-of-the-art facility. Business programs at the major institutions within the state of Indiana are all accredited by the same agency and therefore offer a similar undergraduate and MBA core curriculum (all programs in the Scott college have been fully accredited by AACSB-International, the premier business accrediting agency, since 1980). All ISU business majors take the same core business course and then move beyond that with at least 18 credits of specialized classes in their major.
- Each state institution offers a selection of business majors that provide education beyond the business core; *the Scott College offers ten*. Some of these majors are common to all institutions (e.g. accounting, finance, marketing) but *business education and insurance are offered at only ISU and Ball State*. The Scott College has a long history and an extensive support network for these and other programs.
- Placement is high for all majors within the college and is at or near 100% for insurance and risk management, operations and supply chain management, and business education. After celebrating its 50th anniversary, interest in the Scott College remains strong, with enrollment of over 1200 majors in the fall of 2015.
- All business majors have multiple opportunities for experiential learning. Six of the required business core classes are designated with the experiential learning attribute in the undergraduate schedule of classes. These classes are at the 100, 300 and 400 level so provide an ongoing experience with increasing expectations.
- All business courses are housed in the completely renovated Federal Building, and include smart classrooms, smart conference rooms, and a trading lab. Nine sales recording labs are located in student breakout rooms.
- Among major classes, an academic internship course is offered in all majors except business education (those students do student teaching). Many required major classes have a strong experiential learning component. Students are also given an opportunity to

showcase their experiential learning work through the MO Show, a spring semester poster presentation for students in marketing and OSCM courses.

2. Multi-College Community Health Initiatives and Services:

Through the committee's research, and especially its conversations with academic deans, it became clear that Indiana State University provides a variety of related (but often uncoordinated) healthcare services to the community via the activities and missions of various clinical centers. These services provide measurable value to the community from the academic and professional expertise of faculty and the research and clinical activities of students. These centers include:

- ***Grosjean Center*** (Bayh College of Education):
 - *Clinical Mental Health Counseling Clinic*: Provides an array of counseling services
 - *Porter School Psychology Center*: Psychological and education evaluation
 - *Rowe Center for Communication Disorders*: Therapy series and diagnostic testing
- ***Psychology Clinic*** (College of Arts and Sciences): Individual, group and couples psychotherapy and evaluation
- ***Rural Health Innovation Collaborative*** (College of HHS): Community collaboration and inter-professional research and education across a full spectrum of healthcare issues
- ***Center for Genomic Advocacy*** (Unbounded Possibilities): Genome science-based research and health counseling
- ***Sycamore Nursing Center*** (College of HHS): Low-cost immunization and wellness services.
- ***West Central Indiana Area Health Education Center*** (College of HHS): Educates and provides resources to pre-college and college students, health care providers, school counselors and community members in medically underserved communities.
- ***Physical Therapy and Sports Rehabilitation Clinic*** (College of HHS): Accepts both insured and uninsured patients. Offers cardiac, surgical, and stroke rehab, pediatric and geriatric treatment plans, chronic pain solutions, wound care, performance enhancement, and sports injury rehab.

We recommend these centers and activities, because of: 1) their thematic cohesion around health care, 2) their shared service to the community through academic expertise and programs, and 3) significant career opportunities in these fields.

Recommended Actions:

1. Develop marketing campaigns to promote the distinctive programs.

Indiana State's current marketing campaign is focused on building brand awareness and perception. Highlighting some of our distinctive programs to prospective students and influencers will improve our brand perception. We recommend developing a mini-campaign for each distinctive program. These mini-campaigns should be based on the University's main marketing campaign theme (There's More To Blue). Primary goal for the mini-campaigns is to

position the distinctive programs as leaders at the national level. Campaign messages should also focus on featuring scholarships and faculty experts within each area.

Even though only a small percentage of our incoming class would enroll in one of the advertised distinctive programs, we believe showcasing that Indiana State has programs of national distinction will improve the brand perception, and eventually helping all the programs at the University indirectly.

2. Allocate marketing budget to promote the distinctive programs through paid media.

Paid media (aka advertising) is a quick way to promote a product or service and increase awareness. The University marketing budget is primarily allocated to building the overall brand awareness and perception. We need to stay aggressive with our marketing efforts; our spending levels are already lower than several of our competitors. Thus, we recommend allocating separate/new marketing budget dedicated to promoting all the distinctive programs. Allocating marketing dollars to raise the profile of the distinctive programs is a critical step to the success of this plan.

3. Promote some of the faces behind the distinctive programs through content marketing.

Content marketing is one of the most powerful ways to reach Gen Y and Z. Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience. We recommend selecting a few subject matter experts and students in each of the distinctive programs and promoting their work and experience through social media, earned media (TV, newspaper, etc.) and STATE magazine. Even though this initiative may not cost as much as some of our other recommendations, this is the least predictable tactic because we are relying on other people's actions for our outcomes. For example, it is hard to predict what story may go viral in social media or what story would attract Indy Star. It depends on other environmental factors in the media. However, the payoff could be big and could reduce the reliance of paid media over time.

4. Develop a recruitment plan for the distinctive programs.

We need to capitalize on the interest generated by all the marketing efforts. We recommend exploring assigning subject matter experts within the Admissions office for each of the distinctive program and linking them with a faculty liaison in the academic departments. We could have preview days focused on each of the programs and that would give prospective students a closer look at the program, faculty and staff behind it. It could also serve as an opportunity to connect current students in those programs with prospective students to share about their experience at Indiana State and the department. Also, we recommend investigating the opportunity to provide additional/new scholarships to these five areas.

In addition, representatives from the strategic planning process, Communications and Marketing and the selected program areas should develop an integrated framework within the planning timeline for promoting student success and graduation/job placement.

5. Coordinated community health initiatives and services.

We recommend all the centers and clinics identified under Key Findings #2 (Multi-College Community Health Initiatives and Services) coordinate their marketing efforts and significant career opportunities in these fields, and become a featured aspect of the University's marketing campaign.

6. Request that all distinctive programs submit a plan for student success and support.

Before we market and recruit students for the programs identified in this report, we recommend asking the departments to submit a student success and support plan for each program. This would ensure the departments have enough resources to support the additional students they may get from this effort and all students receive adequate support. Graduation and placement rates are critical to all distinctive programs in order to have marketing credibility.