

## **INSTITUTIONAL DISTINCTIVENESS AT INDIANA STATE UNIVERSITY**

October 4, 2005

Over the past several years, Indiana State University has been working to enhance its reputation in Indiana and beyond. The Distinctive Program Initiative will distinguish our university by recognizing and supporting programs or activities that have achieved a national and/or regional reputation for the quality of their work, that reflect the values of Indiana State, and that meet state and/or national needs.

The goals of this strategic initiative are to (1) recognize what we do well so that we can build upon and strengthen these qualities and (2) identify activities that should be strategically enhanced through targeted investments. The recognition of distinctive programs is directed at two constituencies, internal and external, and serves a twofold purpose. Internally, such recognition fosters appreciation for the quality of the university's academic programs and accomplishments of faculty, students, and alumni. It also encourages and supports programs in their achievement of excellence and assists the institution in developing strategic directions. Externally, the recognition of distinctive programs broadcasts the pride we feel to our external stakeholders, including potential students and the general public. Such recognition promotes public awareness of specific outstanding accomplishments and invites investment in our institution.

All will benefit by the increased visibility and recognition that distinctive programs will bring to Indiana State University. Faculty in programs of distinction are expected to mentor and share their experiences with others at ISU and to be visible and involved externally, including seeking external funds. This is a capacity-building initiative that should promote collaboration.

This initiative builds upon the work of the Distinctive Programs Committee, which issued a report in April 2004 entitled Pursuing Institutional Distinctiveness. The report is posted at <http://irt2.indstate.edu/home/strat/files/pdf/sp2004/prideR2.pdf>.

### Definitions

"Distinctiveness" refers to those activities, qualities, and accomplishments that enable an institution to enjoy a unique identity or an academic reputation for which a university is known, admired, and valued. Institutional distinctiveness occurs in at least two dimensions. First, distinctiveness may result when an individual or group of individuals accomplishes something that is highly valued by both external and internal audiences. These accomplishments carry descriptors such as "national leader" or "world class." This type of distinctiveness is referred to as "vertical" distinctiveness. A second dimension of distinctiveness occurs when something noteworthy happens across multiple programs, units, or even across the whole university. This type of distinctiveness helps define the entire institution. This dimension can be thought of as "horizontal" distinctiveness.

Most distinctive institutions have cultivated academic quality in selected areas. This is accomplished in a variety of ways, such as:

- Disciplinary excellence (e.g., languages at Middlebury, Teachers College at Columbia, finance at the University of Pennsylvania).
- Pedagogy (e.g., cooperative education at Northeastern; community based learning at Portland State, undergraduate research at UW-LaCrosse, enhancement of learning through laptops at UW-Stout and Winona).
- Graduate education and research (e.g., research extensive universities).
- Public service and engagement (e.g., land-grant institutions, California State University-Sacramento and California State University-Monterey Bay).

In many cases distinctiveness is pursued and achieved through multiple strategies that combine or integrate one or more of the strategies mentioned above.

For this initiative, a program may be a department, one program within a department that has multiple programs, a center, or collaboration between departments and/or units. The distinctive programs initiative is not intended to provide start-up funds for entirely new programs.

### **Principles**

The following principles developed by the Distinctive Programs Committee should be the starting point for the Distinctive Programs Initiative.

- Remain consistent with and supportive of the University's mission, core values, strategic goals, and promise statement (attached and posted at the Academic Affairs Web site);
- Strive to unify the academic community, build upon its existing strengths, and help units/programs to achieve their full potential;
- Make participation voluntary;
- Recognize multiple forms of distinctiveness and stages of development towards distinctiveness;
- Include substantive investment by the University as a means of leveraging additional resources;
- Ensure evaluation based on clear criteria including objective data, comparative analysis, and external validation; and
- Provide for eminent recognition for a defined period and include opportunities for review and renewal.

### **Criteria for Selection and Assessment of Distinctive Programs**

Distinctiveness can be either horizontal (i.e., involving multiple disciplines or a program that involves the entire campus) or vertical (i.e., discipline-based). Our definition of distinctiveness includes both recognizing distinctiveness that already exists, as well as

supporting strategic initiatives that would result in future distinctiveness. Programs making the case for existing distinctiveness (i.e., at the state through international levels) would demonstrate how they have already met the criteria. Programs making the case for Program of Promise would demonstrate that the possibility for external distinctiveness exists and how strategic investments would result in achieving such distinctiveness. The general criteria for reviewing programs have been grouped into a set of three categories. Applicants are encouraged to address each of the criteria under each category clearly and directly and to write the application for non-specialists (i.e., a general academic community) to facilitate review.

- **Alignment** of the program to the mission and vision of the University
  - Centrality to the institution's mission, core values, strategic goals, and promise statement.
  - Consistency with the vision of ISU becoming a pre-eminent institution known for community engagement and experiential learning.
  - Correspondence with or contributions to other institutional programs and activities (i.e., mutually beneficial relationships).
  - Significance or importance to society and/or the academic community.
- **Program Quality, Assets, and Resources**
  - Program size, scope, and productivity (including faculty productivity and reputation among students). Robust enrollment is essential to demonstrating distinctiveness.
  - Program quality as evidenced by comparative analysis and external validation.
  - Evidence of external support - financial and other.
  - Stakeholder commitment
- **Action Plan and Future Potential**
  - The quality and feasibility of the action plan including a clear timeline and measurable benchmarks/outcomes.
  - Ability to generate external financial support.
  - Boldness of ideas and efforts (especially for Programs of Promise)
  - Assessment plan

The Committee plans to conduct independent validation of the evidence presented in the proposals. To promote thorough discussion and planning, statements from department chairperson(s) and dean(s) must be attached to proposals. These statements will describe how this program and its plans for the future fit within department or college priorities and specific support that will be provided by the department and college.

### **Resources Supporting the Initiative**

Funding from the Lilly Endowment's "Initiative to Recruit and Retain Intellectual Capital for Indiana Higher Education Institutions" will provide the support for the first three years. The long-term plan for funding for this initiative will include a combination a new private funding from gifts, grants, and contracts, as well as the reallocation of base budget funding.

As stated earlier, the goals of this strategic initiative are to (1) recognize what we do well so that we can build upon and strengthen these qualities and (2) identify activities that should be strategically enhanced through targeted investments. By its very nature, this initiative is a shared effort to acknowledge and advance the reputation of selected programs; an internal partnership of sorts. Consequently, it is impossible at the outset to predetermine the exact nature of what is needed to recognize and promote specific programs (i.e., needs will vary from program to program). Recognition as a Distinctive Program includes additional funding to enable programs to maintain/enhance their quality guided by a plan of action. Applicants should propose the nature and anticipated sources of support needed to maintain their program's distinctiveness and/or to facilitate its growth and development.

It is envisioned that three or four programs would be funded in each category. It is not the intention of this initiative to award numerous small amounts. Applicants are encouraged to describe how distinctive program awards will be combined with reallocated internal funding and new external funding to create an investment that will enable these programs to go to the next level.

Funding will be allocated in the following ways:

- Programs of National Distinction – up to \$300,000 total. Funding would not exceed \$100,000 per program over the initial three-year period. These are programs that are demonstrably among the best in the nation among similar institutions or programs. Programs selected will be able to apply for renewal. It is generally expected that programs awarded this recognition will maintain this level of excellence.
- Programs of Regional/State Distinction - up to \$300,000 total. Funding would not exceed \$100,000 per program over the initial three-year period. These are programs that are demonstrably among the best in the Midwest or the State of Indiana among similar institutions or programs. It is generally expected that programs awarded this recognition will maintain this level of excellence and should consider what would be required to move the program to one of National Distinction.
- Programs of Promise - up to \$300,000 total. Funding would not exceed \$100,000 per program over the initial three-year period. These programs that are of high quality and have the potential for becoming distinctive at the regional/state or national levels. Programs of Promise will be expected to present a plan that would enable the program or new collaboration of existing programs to move to the status of Program of Regional/State Distinction or National Distinction. It is expected that the journey would be completed in a time frame of four years or less. Generally programs will not be able to renew this status of recognition unless there are special circumstances that justify such action.

Continuation of recognition and funding is contingent upon satisfactory progress toward meeting benchmarks/outcomes. Awardees will be required to submit annual reports of progress that are linked directly to the action and assessment plan included in their application and may be asked to provide basic progress information every six months to allow the University to meet its reporting needs to the Lilly Endowment.

Programs may apply for the designation without applying for funding. The process of self-study, goal setting, and planning that are the foundations for developing applications are valuable activities independent of awards of funding or designations of distinctiveness.

Awardees will be required to submit annual reports of progress that are linked directly to the action and assessment plan included in their application. Continuation of recognition and funding is contingent upon satisfactory progress toward meeting benchmarks/outcomes. Awardees may be required to provide information on progress every six months to allow the University to meet its reporting needs to the Lilly Endowment.

### **Selection Process**

A Distinctive Programs Committee will be named and charged to provide oversight to this Initiative. The Committee will include representation from faculty, deans, department chairs, staff, students, and external constituencies. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs will serve as an ex-officio member of the Committee, and the Committee may add ex-officio members on an as needed basis. On a case-by-case basis, the Committee may need to call upon external "experts" to provide input for clarification and validation beyond what the program has provided. Appointments to the committee will be made for staggered terms to ensure continuity. Terms will be from one to three years.

The Committee shall make its recommendation to the Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs (VPAA). The VPAA shall present recommendations to the President. The President, in consultation with the Board of Trustees, shall make the final decision on awards.

There will be two requests for proposals (RFPs) and sets of awards during the 2005-2006 academic year.

1. **The first RFP is for Programs of Promise only** because:
  - a. The amount of external documentation typically will be less for this application.
  - b. This will enable funding to be awarded more quickly so Programs of Promise may work on moving to the next level.
2. **The second RFP is for all programs.**

## **Timelines**

### First RFP—Programs of Promise

October 4	Formal announcement of the initiative and distribution of Request for Proposals
November 15	Preliminary applications due to Committee
December 1	Committee recommendations to Provost
December 15	Provost will announce those areas that are invited to submit a full proposal
February 1	Full proposals due
February 15	Recommendation to Provost regarding programs to be selected.
February 24	Announcement of programs selected

### Second RFP—Programs of National Distinction, Programs of Regional/State Distinction, and Programs of Promise

October 4	Formal announcement of the initiative and distribution of Request for Proposals
December 1	Preliminary applications due to committee
December 16	Committee recommendations to Provost (recommendations will include possible reallocation of funds if any categories have either no or few recommended awardees).
January 16	Provost will announce those areas that are invited to submit a full proposal
March 20	Full proposals due
April 14	Recommendation to Provost regarding programs to be selected.
May 1	Announcement of programs selected

## **Preliminary Proposal Procedures**

Applicants will submit a preliminary proposal using the application forms to the Distinctive Programs Committee (a paper copy with original signatures and an electronic

copy). The application form will be available on-line in Microsoft Word or PDF format and it must be no more than 4 pages in length (single spaced, 12 pt., Times Roman or Times New Roman font). The preliminary proposal should address the following:

- A narrative addressing the criteria. The narrative should identify the evidence that the applicant plans to bring forward to make the case for distinctiveness.
- A plan of action that includes:
  - how the program proposes to use the award
  - benchmarks/outcomes
  - timeline
  - preliminary budget
- For the second RFP, the category in which the applicant wishes to be considered.

The committee will provide specific feedback to the applicants. The Office of Sponsored Programs will be asked to identify potential sources of external funding when appropriate and to work with these programs to develop proposals for external funding.

### **Full Proposal Procedures**

Invited applicants will submit a full proposal for consideration to the Distinctive Programs Committee (submit a paper copy with original signatures and an electronic copy). The proposal should be in 12 point font, **no more than 30 pages double-spaced**. Additional supporting documentation to substantiate the claims of excellence may be added as appendices. Under no circumstances should the document, including appendices, exceed 100 pages in length. In addition to a more-complete coverage of the items included in the preliminary proposal, the full proposal should address the following:

- A summary of substantive data collected from internal and external sources.
- Letters of support and other testimonials.
- Evidence of stakeholder commitment that at a minimum includes support (including a description of continuing and new resources) and signatures from the program's Department Chair and Dean.
- A description of the type of support (i.e., award for distinctiveness) that would be most beneficial to the continued growth and development of the program.

The committee will provide specific feedback to the applicants.

### **Plans for the Future**

If sufficient funds from the Lilly grant remain, then there will be a second application process during the 2006-2007 academic year. Funding from the Lilly Endowment is one part of a longer-term strategic initiative. Additional support is expected from reallocation by departments, colleges, and administrative units, from partnerships and collaboration, and from external funding through grants, donations, and contracts.

Distinctive Programs Committee  
Fall 2005

Sister Alma Mary Anderson  
Earl Blair, Health, Safety, and Environmental Health Sciences  
Kweku Bentil, Graduate Studies  
Tad Foster, College of Technology  
David Hofmeister, Curriculum, Instruction, and Media Technology  
Tom Johnson, Psychology  
Connie McLaren, Analytical  
Tom Ramey, Student Affairs  
Tom Sauer, Arts and Sciences  
Karen Schmid, Academic Affairs  
David Campbell, Vice Chair, ISU Foundation