

# LETTER FROM THE president

## What does it take to be a leader in higher education?



IIT has embarked on a strategic planning process, *Many Voices, One Vision*, with the goal of developing the university's unique path to future excellence. Our quest to be recognized as one of the country's top universities is embraced with great pride and a determination to succeed. We can contend for a place among the very best universities by focusing on our strengths in technical and professional education and research, and by leveraging our international diversity and Chicago location.

American universities have long held the premier position in higher education across the world. This leadership is eroding, however, because the rest of the world has recognized that education is the foundation of economic and social well-being. Other countries are investing heavily in higher education. The playing field for recruiting students *and* faculty is increasingly international and more competitive. To stress the latter point, governments of other countries are now providing attractive financial incentives for America's top faculty to be associated with their universities. This trend, coupled with a tightening of U.S. funding for higher education, especially research, has produced challenges for U.S. universities that have not been faced in the past century.

Returning to the original question, educational leadership is defined by *both* the quality *and* the innovativeness of a university's programs. While many universities have individual towers of excellence, those who are identified as leaders have defined one or more themes across their institution, and have committed themselves to continuous innovation consistent with their mission and vision. In all cases, innovation and commitment are the keys to improvement.

Additionally, academic leaders recognize the importance of their students' experiences and continually develop curricula and out-of-classroom programs to better prepare students for their future careers and self-fulfillment. They realize that the graduates are our most important "product." Finally, academic leaders understand that vigorous programs of research and scholarship advance the educational mission while also providing a vehicle for continuous improvement of the faculty.

Now is the time for IIT to develop a plan that leverages our strengths, and creates and sustains a university-wide culture that embraces bold and transformational ideas. This may seem to be a daunting task, but past planning efforts, such as the National Commission for IIT and the 2010 Plan, have prepared us well to address our current aspirations. As other universities have demonstrated, by strategically focusing on core strengths and building new initiatives with university-wide priority, it is possible to advance from a mid-level, regional university to an academic leader on a regional, national, and global scale.

Coordinated by the new Office of Institutional Strategy, the *Many Voices, One Vision* strategic planning effort will require the contributions of the entire IIT community to determine how to take IIT to the next level. I want to thank the faculty, students, staff, and trustees who have already been called upon to serve on various planning committees, and I welcome the input of all of you. While decisions must be made as we develop our strategies, the key factor in making the right decisions is input from all our constituencies.

Through smart choices and collective participation, I know we will shape a successful plan. We must then have the courage to adhere to our plan once it is in place. I ask you to join me in this quest for excellence, and I thank you for your confidence, determination, and continued trust.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John L. Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John L. Anderson  
President