



**ADVANCEMENT SECTION**

**REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE  
EVALUATION VISIT**

TO

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## I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

During the decade since the last HLC comprehensive review, IIT, like many institutions, has had to contend with a host of societal and economic trends related to securing a solid base of fiscal sustainability. The challenges imposed by these trends notwithstanding, IIT has increased the academic profile of its undergraduates, initiated an enrollment management strategy, exceeded expectations for the Challenge Campaign by raising \$270 million in less time and 10% ahead of the campaign's declared goal, expanded its international presence, increased research productivity, and instituted fiscal procedures that are leading to continued sustainability. IIT is in a unique position to move to deeper integration of IP (from Engineering, Bio-sciences, and Design) with the expertise and experience from specific areas in business and law. Few institutions are so well positioned with the key ingredients necessary to consider such deeper integration.

As the fiscal challenges have lessened, shared governance has returned to the "natural tensions" found in universities and more inclusion of the faculty and student voice in key university initiatives. It will be important for institutional and Board of Trustee leadership's attention to continue to be inclusive of the many voices of the university's constituencies during the current Presidential search process. The 2010 planning process and a strong leadership team on the Board of Trustees provide a platform for the leadership transitions that will occur during the next year with the retirement of the President after a tenure of 16 years and the simultaneous retirement of the Chair of the Board of Trustees. IIT is positioned well for responding to its future due to the significant progress that has been made during the last decade.

## II. CONSULTATION OF THE TEAM

### DIVERSITY

While an internationally rich campus, there is a need to expand the concept of diversity with attention to domestic underrepresented populations. The strategic decision to grow its international population has been successful, an unanticipated result has been a narrowing of institutional diversity and limited attention has been placed on diversification of its domestic faculty and student populations. Although we live in an increasingly global society, it will be important for IIT to develop more balanced institutional diversity in its faculty and student populations to reflect its mission and commitment to the urban community in which it resides. The team is optimistic as the issue of domestic diversification is a priority of the leadership team as evidenced by the institutional request for consultation regarding suggestions of best practice in attracting and keeping African American and Latino engineering and science faculty and a specific commitment from the incoming Board of Trustee's Chair to institutional movement in this area.

Institutional diversity is a very complex matter. It needs to be recognized that there are many forms of diversity far beyond just racial diversity including other types such as gender, nationality, religious, cultural, ethnic, geographic, socio-economic status, abilities, disabilities, and/or sexual orientation. To attempt to address just one of these differences will not allow success in promoting a campus that reflects diverse populations in its students and faculty but more importantly incorporates diversity in its institutional culture. Studies have shown that diversity is important for the overall success of an institution. Diverse campuses help to promote honest, open dialogue regarding diversity issues among faculty, staff and students. Students that graduate from diverse campuses tend to be better citizens. Thus, recognition and promotion of a

broadened inclusiveness of diversity is necessary to achieve success in any desired area including recruiting and retaining faculty of color.

Recruiting and retaining faculty of color requires an approach on multiple fronts. The challenge of recruiting and retaining faculty in the fields of engineering and science are similar for faculty of color and women. Institutions are faced with both small pools of individuals interested in the fields of engineering and science and the competition of higher education as career with opportunities in the business and corporate sectors. It requires long-term commitment and resources on the part of the institution. Within this context, the following recommendations are suggested for creating a culture that expects and reflects diversity.

### **Development of a *culture* reflective of the value of diversity**

- Make diversity a high and *visible* priority for the university. Articulation of the value of a diverse institution and commitment to this as a priority must be evident to both internal and external communities from the highest levels of the university administration and Board of Trustees. Acceptance of the goal of a diverse institution by the faculty and staff is critical. Acceptance of the goal implies that there is value added to the institution's educational mission through a diverse environment and educational experiences.
- Develop *special* programs (e.g., guest lecturers, seminars, etc.) for faculty, staff and students that will promote a discourse on diversity –particularly the value added and importance of a broadened perspective of diversity. In addition, integrating such discourse appropriately into current initiatives on such as globalization, community change, and institutional outcomes for students (what distinguishes the IIT student based on their educational experience) reinforces that diversity is not an add-on but a part of the institutional fabric.
- Integrate diversity issues into the curriculum and develop multi-cultural courses (e.g., inclusion of the research and professional contributions of famous African-American and Latino scientists and engineers). Incorporate and require such courses as part of the required core curriculum for all students. Utilize professional networks and corporate partnerships to identify guest lecturers from these groups for specific course presentations that are not specifically addressing diversity but substantive professional content areas or broad career preparation for all students.
- Provide for coordination, support and oversight of these efforts, options might include a strategy similar to the institution's communication across the curriculum initiative, hiring a Director of Multi-Cultural Affairs, incorporating into the appropriate academic affairs position, or an oversight committee the responsibility for promoting the development of multi-cultural courses and bring special programs to campus.
- Engage prominent IIT alumni representing underrepresented diverse groups to help build the culture of diversity. The prior campus and subsequent life experiences of these individuals may provide the campus community a valuable perspective on the value of diversity.

### **Specific recommendations for recruitment and retention of faculty**

- Make the recruitment of *domestic* students of color a *high priority*. Having a student body that includes students of color helps attract faculty of color and *vice versa*. A more balanced (international students/domestic students of color) diverse student body will visibly indicate that IIT's diversity does not just mean international. The Admissions Office staff must include racial diversity. Continue to participate in community programs and initiatives such as enhancing science and math education in the Chicago Public Schools, supporting not only early student interest in the field but the skills to succeed at IIT.
- Make the recruitment of faculty and staff of color a *high priority*. Effective strategies extend beyond advertisement in minority magazines and other publications. Using the institution's strong networks with the profession, professional associations and its alumni, and build on corporate and academic partnerships establish linkages with potential candidates prior to faculty position openings. Provide opportunities for campus involvement and interaction for individuals in the professions who may not have considered an academic career.
- Assure that search committees are not application screening committees, but committees that seek minority candidates. Identify strategies and resources (contacts, personal and professional networks, etc.) for aggressively seeking minority candidates and hold committees accountable for including viable minority candidates in interviewing pools.
- Systematically track faculty retention. The tracking system must identify the reasons for leaving and be inclusive of all faculty to determine systemic issues for all faculty *and* those that are different for faculty of color.

## COMMUNICATION

The need for improved communication was highlighted throughout conversations with a variety of IIT constituencies. While this situation is not uncommon in institutions coming out of crisis, it was clear to the team that some of the concerns reflected a potentially pervasive pattern of suboptimal communication. Several areas have been identified for organizational attention.

### Institutional Mission

As part of the 2010 Plan, the Board of Trustees approved a revised university mission. Although there was broad representation and involvement in the mission, vision and values development process, the implications of the revised mission have not been clearly communicated. There is internal confusion on exactly what that mission is (multiple versions can be found among university documents and websites) and how it changes IIT's interaction with its community. The current university mission should be clearly communicated to all constituencies (internal and external). A continuing dialogue is essential regarding what makes IIT unique (the results marketed internally and externally) and the effect of the revised mission statement elements on the plans and actions of IIT, its administration, faculty, staff, and students.

### Strategic Plan Implementation

The 2010 Plan is being advanced through the use of the yearly operational plans, which delineate annual goals and resources for each unit of the university. The broader university community, however, is not aware of these plans and, as such, may not be

able to direct their actions to support their implementation. Publication of the annual goals and the progress status of the 2010 Plan implementation will provide the opportunity for all internal stakeholders to take an active part in achieving the priorities outlined in the 2010 Plan.

### **Within and Outside of Campus**

The accomplishments, activities, and plans within IIT are exciting – but do not have an optimum impact if they are not communicated to a broader audience. Both internal and external constituencies noted a lack of information of what was going on within other groups on campus. This was noted specifically among the following constituencies: (1) cross campuses (e.g., Downtown, Main, and Rice), (2) different departments and divisions within the university, and (3) external stakeholders, both within the neighboring community and the broader region. It is recommended that an *enhanced* communication plan be developed at all levels that would include attention to the following areas:

- Description of major planned activities within departments, e.g., planned improvements in facilities and schedules for renovations
- Orientation of new staff and faculty to geography and activities of *all* campuses
- Campus activities designed to bring faculty and staff outside of their home department to increase opportunities for conversation and collaboration
- Communication of accomplishments of alumni, students, staff, and faculty to *all* university constituencies on a regular basis
- Highlighting of community outreach activities for *all* campuses in order to clarify the university's continued engagement with its local neighbors

### **Full Engagement of all Constituencies**

The desire for full engagement by its faculty and neighboring communities is a strength. The faculty noted a desire to be “part of the solution” as the university continues face its challenges. Thus, the incoming administrative leadership has a unique opportunity to take greater advantage of the creativity, knowledge, and skills of IIT's faculty, staff, students, and community when developing plans to move forward with the university's mission and address the challenges that will face the institution in the future. An initial strategy for such inclusive engagement is participation in multiple phases of the Presidential search process such as input into the dialogue on the position description and once the search is past the confidential phase of the search/interview process.

### **CO-CURRICULAR EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS**

Although IIT has demonstrated success in its efforts to enhance the academic profile of its students, the future for recruitment and retention of high quality students is an increasingly competitive environment. Beyond academic rigor, the quality of the overall student experience will play a major role in a student's decision on where to enroll, whether they choose to stay at IIT or transfer to another university, and whether they will become engaged alumni. Examination of IIT's retention data shows that many students decide to leave IIT because they feel a lack of connection to the campus and its faculty. The results of the 2005 National Survey of Student Engagement show that IIT students rate the university as lacking in three important categories: (1) Supportive Campus Environment; (2) Enriching Educational Experiences; and (3) Student-Faculty Interaction. This data within an increasingly competitive environment requires IIT to invest in continuing to improve the non-academic and co-curricular experiences of its students.

New initiatives in the residence halls, reinstatement of the HUB (or whatever it was from students) and the charge of the University Task Force on the Student Experience are laying the foundation for change. However, students remained concerned about growing the student population beyond the capacity of the institution's facilities. Areas specifically identified were the need for more resources supporting the residence halls on campus and development of a wellness center that could centralize some programs and provide a more educational role encompassing recreation, wellness, counseling and health services. Facilities are needed to accommodate the growing number of sports clubs that demand additional space and to reduce conflict with recreational usage.

Consideration should be given in the design, development of operating policies and programming of a recreation center to usage by multiple constituencies (i.e., residential and commuter students, faculty and staff). Such a design would encourage increased interaction between multiple members of the IIT community and signal a strong indication of IIT's commitment to the well-being of its campus community.

### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING**

As IIT moves forward, it will need to continue to build on the base of assessment practices which are currently in place, and equip the faculty with the resources necessary to improve assessment practices. While recognizing the autonomy inherent in the various academic units comprising IIT, the team observed that more systematic review of the status of assessment activities and/or dissemination of outcomes beyond the School or department level would provide more consistent oversight of institutional assessment of student learning. Benefits of a centralized oversight would allow greater evaluation of resource allocation needs supporting assessment activities, enhanced support on assessment practices for faculty, and greater alignment of institutional assessment data with the requirements of discipline accreditation organizations and other agencies. Many publications and conferences are available to assist faculty and staff with assessment efforts, such as those provided by the Higher Learning Commission, Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis, and the Association for Institutional Research.