



Martin Jischke

2005 Volunteer of the Year

Sit down for a discussion with Purdue University President Martin Jischke and it won't take long before the word engagement enters into the conversation. He says learning, discovery and engagement are three missions of any land grant university. Jischke has taken engagement to a whole new level.

"We have to use our educational capacity to actually affect society. Engagement is a two-way street – the interaction of the university in the larger society and for we in the university to learn from society to change the university. We have to be engaged, be involved, bring ideas to the table."

Jischke says he is carrying out the mandate – to take Purdue to the next level in a way that makes Indiana a better state – from the board of trustees when he was hired as the university president in August 2000. Aligning the university's efforts with creating the best possible economic future for the state has paid off for both entities.

"It's unmistakably clear that Purdue is a better university. Our efforts in economic development are enhancing the education of our students," Jischke contends. "Our No. 1 priority is our students – their learning. The size and strength of our research programs has improved. We're clearly more engaged, and Purdue is contributing to the development of Indiana's economy."

Purdue's emerging Discovery Park, its role in developing certified technology parks and other specific outreach efforts statewide may not have been envisioned five years ago. But its alignment with meeting the state's economic needs has been a priority from the beginning.

Strong partners

The tireless Jischke is constantly selling Purdue and the state throughout Indiana and beyond. The economic development focus helped bring him to the Chamber, where he has served on the board of directors since 2001. He was a previous member of the Economic Development policy committee and currently chairs the Business-Higher Education Forum.

The university's outreach goals and the Chamber's business assistance mission have been a strong match. And, like others, Jischke says he benefits from the gathering of business, education and political leaders.

"It was natural for us to seek partnerships with those interested in the economic future of Indiana," he relates. "Progress hinges on effective partnerships between university, government and the private sector. The Chamber, with its statewide constituency, is a natural partner for that kind of thinking, and the Chamber leadership has embraced the notion of partnership."

"For me, it's a terrific networking opportunity to be with leaders of both the education and business worlds," Jischke continues. "The relationship and personal friendships I've developed are very important. It also gives me the opportunity to find allies, to make the case for higher education personally."

Jischke is among the leaders at Chamber board meetings. "I'm not without opinions on topics of considerable interest to me," says the man who came to Purdue after nine years as president of Iowa State University, five as chancellor of the University of Missouri-Rolla and other positions that included being a White House fellow and special assistant to the U.S. secretary of transportation. "I have a responsibility, as well as desire, to lend what I can to the larger debate."

Working together

The Alliance for Indiana's Future, a key voice in helping implement major 2002 tax restructuring, was an example of the partnerships Jischke values so much. The conglomeration of business, education,

Martin Jischke, at work in his office and as co-chair of the Chamber's Business-Higher Education Forum.



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labor, rural, urban, traditional Democrat and traditional Republican leaders gave political officials “evidence they would be supported if they tackle tough issues.”

The group was “important and powerful” at that time, Jischke recalls, with future broad-based involvement depending on the issues at stake. The value of forming a consensus of leaders working for the better good is an attribute that will carry on.

Jischke believes the economic changes of recent years – mergers, loss of headquarters, ebbs and flows in the automotive sector – have people more willing to accept the change that is needed. The efforts of Purdue and other universities, partnerships such as the Alliance and the programs of the Chamber, he adds, are all recognition of that necessity.

“The reshaping of Indiana’s economy, creating more high-paying

jobs, is the important objective,” he reiterates. “On that issue, I don’t think there is much question. On how we accomplish that, there is room for difference. I think we’re getting better through our partnering. But does everyone agree how to do it? No. That’s probably a healthy thing.”

Jischke hopes that his and Purdue’s active involvement serves as another lesson for students on civic engagement and the importance of public service. Indiana’s citizenry at large is also receiving an additional benefit.

“We want to reinforce to taxpayers that the very precious investments they make (in higher education) are paying off for everybody.”

Just as Jischke’s leadership is shaping Purdue’s progression and the state’s economic transformation.