



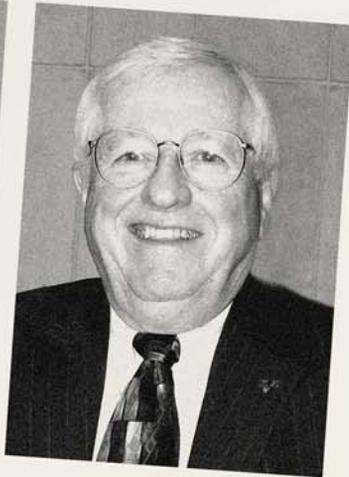
BEVERLEY PITTS



RAY HOOPS



LLOYD BENJAMIN



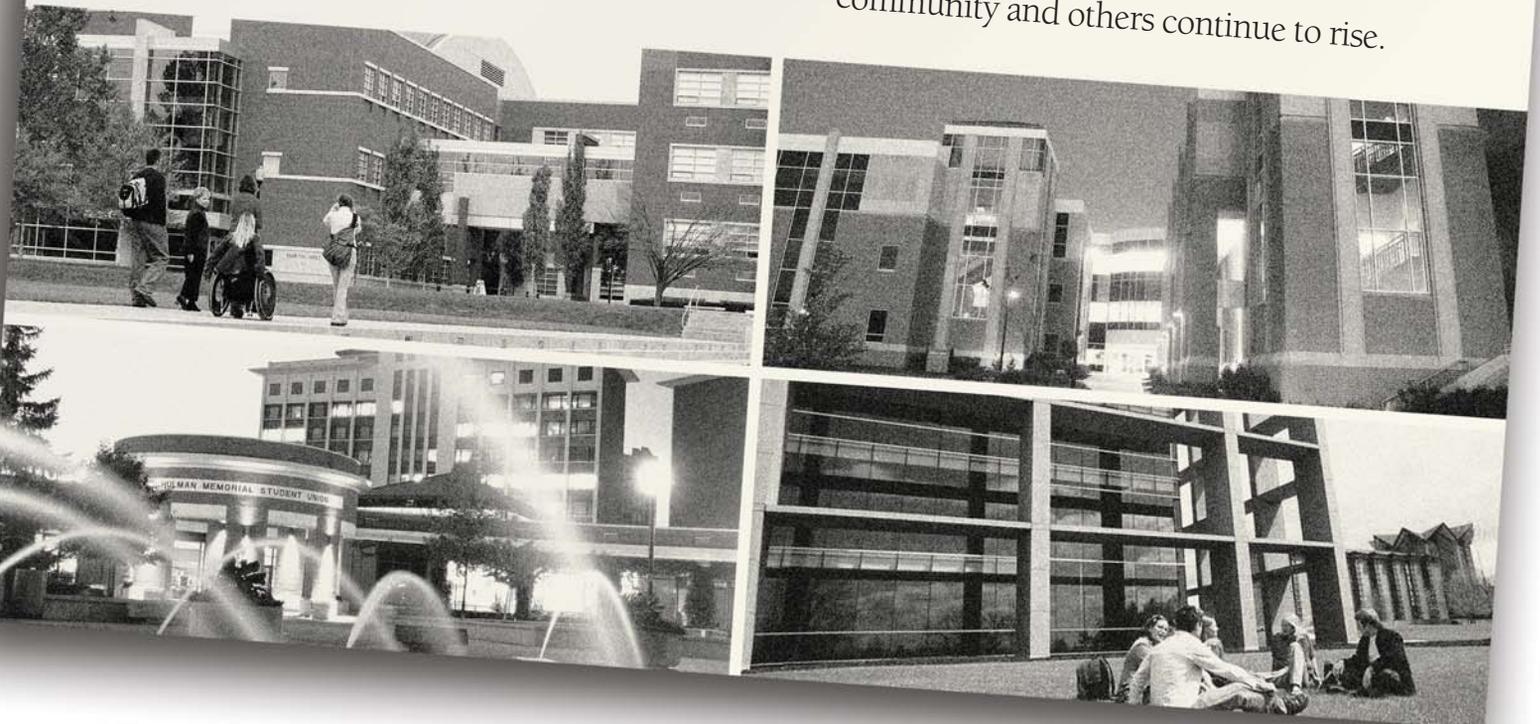
ALAN HARRE

Presidential Proclamations

University Leaders Discuss Changes and Challenges

So you want to be a university president? After all, you can presumably have any seat you want at those athletic contests. You get to meet with a wide array of interesting people. The travel opportunities are almost endless.

There are a few other factors to consider. Financial pressures are at an all-time high. You have a personal responsibility for students, university employees, alumni and donors. Expectations from parents, the business community and others continue to rise.



By Tom Schuman

Among the lessons that Lloyd Benjamin, president of Indiana State University (ISU), says he learned early on: “No matter where you go and what you do, you are always the university. ... You really struggle to maintain any kind of control of your calendar. It is 24/7.”

This *BizVoice*® roundtable looks at not only the changing role of presidents, but how colleges and universities must adapt to other transformations in higher education. The four university presidents taking part are:

Participants

- Benjamin, at Indiana State since 2000
- Alan Harre, in his 18th year at Valparaiso University
- H. Ray Hoops, at the University of Southern Indiana (USI) since 1994
- Beverley Pitts, in her first year at the University of Indianapolis

Changing landscape

Harre, who was president of a small school in Minnesota at the time, recalls that he was a reluctant candidate for his current position. While the accomplishments are many and the positive experiences plentiful, that doesn't change reality.

“I've often said to my wife that I could not have a more demanding mistress than the university ...” he offers. “I've been at it 18 years here, so I've grown to the task. But at the same time it hasn't gotten easier. The task of being president is more difficult today than it was 10 years ago, and 10 years ago it was more difficult than 20 years ago simply because of all the things that are impacting upon us.”

Among those impacts, according to Harre: the “normal pact ... that higher education as a public good has been lost,” ever-increasing demands from students and parents with a reluctance to pay for those demands and more regulations coupled with less government support.

Benjamin describes the public view of higher education as shifting to one of individual pursuit rather than the role of serving society in general. The result, he attests, is the former presidential perception of “a figure who resides over a rather calm, engaged group of people creating knowledge” no longer being the same.

Hobbs agrees with his colleagues' observation, but says that's not all bad. “The pressures, I think, are making universities better than they ever were in dealing with the realities of educating an ever larger proportion of the population.” He hopes the eroded view of higher education as a public good can be restored as colleges and universities improve in how they meet that added responsibility.

Private institutions, like Valparaiso, inadvertently raise the expectations by marketing the fact that they are typically smaller and can provide more individual attention to students. As a result, Harre notes that parents feel entitled to call his office to, for example, complain about the lack of heat in their child's dorm room.

The marketing, as well as increased competition in higher education, is among the factors at play, Pitts comments. Like their public counterparts, she says private institutions have the expectations of “reaching out to the community, of being part of economic development.” She adds that technology, keeping up with and paying for the fast-paced changes, is another issue that cannot be ignored.

It's all in the money

A 2005 survey conducted for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* found that five of the top six campus concerns for participating presidents revolved around money. Fifth-three percent of the respondents said they spend part of every day on fund-raising, while budget and finance matters was the next most frequent daily activity at 44%.

“There's no question it drives the process,” Hoops contends. “There's probably not a single president in the country that hasn't found themselves spending more time, as each year went by, on the issue of fund-raising.”

Benjamin says it's difficult to attach percentages to the amount of time spent on certain activities as circumstances change frequently. He gives the example of another school he worked

Opposite page: On campus at (clockwise, from top left) the University of Indianapolis, University of Southern Indiana, Valparaiso University and Indiana State University.

at in which the expectations of the long-term president included that he stay on campus (drinking coffee and talking with faculty, staff and students) much of the time. It's a scenario that simply can't be repeated today.

There is a shift taking place in the occupants of the president's office.

"One of the trends you see in private institutions," Harre notes, "is that more and more presidents are being selected who have not come from the academic side of the operation, but actually from the fund-raising side. Or boards are going out and getting people from business who have had a record of being very entrepreneurial and very successful."

The concern, he adds, is that these people will eventually have much more difficulty staying attuned to the academic and student affairs issues that also remain critical. The importance of that extends into the fund-raising, as well, according to Pitts.

"Raising the money is telling the story. And the more genuinely you can tell the story, the better you can raise the money," she says. "You have to know the story. You have to be a part of that. You have to love that culture. You have to love the institution and know all the pieces of it that provide people the opportunity to invest."

Harre is worried by what he sees from boards of directors as "an attitude that it is a bag of tricks that you've got. Therefore, they're going to hire that person who has that special knowledge about the fund-raising process. And, as a result, their institution is going to be a whole lot better. I think that's fallacious thinking long term."

True team effort

With the external commitments, how does today's university president make sure, to the best of his or her ability, that campus operations are going as well as possible? Although not always thrilled with the university as a business comparison (the companies sometimes don't move as fast as the education sector), Hoops admits to some similarities.

"The principal thing you have to do in this day and age is build an extremely strong administrative team around you. It's that whole principle," he pronounces, "of getting people that are smarter than you are, know more about their jobs than you know. Then it lets you do these other things, which are so important to the institution."

Hoops was able to still teach while serving as president of two larger institutions before coming to USI. That, he says, is an impossibility now.

"I use a heavily delegated chain of command approach. I don't agonize over not being connected. I've tried to do those things I do and have other people do the things that I don't do. That doesn't make it right; it's just been a

personal approach."

At Valparaiso, Harre has made it clear that when he is not on campus that the provost is the acting president. He compares that role to the chief operations officer of a company. Harre has also successfully utilized ad hoc groups and task forces to tackle campus issues quickly and efficiently.



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– Beverley Pitts
University of Indianapolis

Pitts notes that faculty relations are so dominant on a college campus, but that it's important to respect the "internal expertise" present in the business management areas – development, enrollment, dining hall services, marketing, etc. Presidents must be engaged, but allow these highly skilled professionals to operate in a productive structure.

Benjamin, like Harre, stresses the need to move as rapidly as possible.

"What I have done, somewhat deliberately, is to work to flatten the organization in some ways," he offers. "I want to be able to pull together and pool talented people to take on an issue and do it without working through a hierarchy. This ability to work more quickly and responsively to identified needs is something you have to do."

Staying in touch

Illustrating that one-size-fits-all doesn't work, the answers varied when the question was posed of who was the one person they would talk to after being gone for the day.

Harre and Benjamin say they would start with the provost, but Benjamin also has a chief of staff who serves in an integrating role in a number of areas. Hoops has established the vice president for university relations as that person at USI. Pitts originally answered the vice president of business affairs, but said that could easily change based on what were anticipated to be the key issues of the day.

Strong teams and key contacts are important, but there is also no substitute for personal involvement, some say. Pitts, due to recently coming to her position at the University of Indianapolis from Ball State, admits that she probably has an advantage in that she has had to visit classes, meet



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with faculty and students and do the things necessary to learn about the university. It’s a balance she hopes to be able to maintain.

Harre warns, however, that the “longer you’re president, the more external pressures build. There are times when I’m gone four days one week and five days next week and three days the next week that I have this feeling that I have this tangential relationship to this institution and where I say to myself, ‘This is not why I got involved in higher education in the first place.’”

“I recognize that ... the president’s office has clearly changed. If the institution’s going to succeed and survive and flourish, I’m going to have to enthusiastically embrace the way the job has evolved.” He rationalizes that “what I’m doing is making it possible for other people to do their jobs.” Benjamin cites meetings with student leadership and lunches with new faculty as some of the ways he maintains contact. The input from students helps deliver the energy to go out and sell the institution.

“I make it a point to walk around,” Benjamin adds. “You just have to show up at times. People respond to that in ways that you would never imagine. But you can pick up a lot of things.”

Getting down to business

Part of the college-university evolution also involves relationships with the business community. That includes the core role of training students to enter the workforce to the broader mission of helping meet the economic needs of the region or state.

The education-business ties take place in many forms. Harre points to the business-dominated boards of trustees and advisory councils, as well as the interaction with donors who often come from the business community. In Terre Haute, Benjamin describes the ISU role as a major provider of cultural activity, with that vibrant culture an important tool for business attraction.

On the economic development side of the equation, Hoops asserts that “is the peg on which I think all universities hang their hats. It’s important that we not lose sight of the fact that the most important thing we do is provide an opportunity and an atmosphere for personal development because it feeds all these other things. The most important function that we have after that is to support the economic development of individuals and regions.

“It’s important because it’s a role no one else can play. What universities do no one else can do.”

Still, there are the calls to do more. At USI, it’s referred to as the question: “Well, when are you going to ____ – and you can fill in the blank.”

In response to the business concerns that universities are not preparing the types of workers their companies need, Harre responds, “There’s absolutely no way for us to be able to provide the narrow expertise in all of these areas perfectly. I don’t care how good the faculty is or how good the instruction is, there’s no way to be able to prepare a group of accountants or a group of mechanical engineers or a group of civil engineers to be able to respond to every unique characteristic in a culture of a given firm or given organization.”

Hoops and Harre believe business personnel are starting to get on the same page. In the past, CEOs have been saying they value persons with a liberal arts education who bring strong basic skills with them, while human resource directors are looking to fill very specific skill sets.

Pitts, when discussing economic development, issues a reminder that college and university campuses themselves are major economic forces.

“Just by being a successful business we’re putting a lot of money in the economy, as well as the intellectual capital that we draw to the state,” she attests. “I don’t think any other business in the state could say that they draw as much intellectual capital to the state as we do. That’s probably a story that we don’t tell as well as we could.”

Building a better system

The 2004 Government Efficiency Commission report on



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– Alan Harre
Valparaiso University

higher education had little focus on the universities represented here. One of its main drivers, however, was the enhancement of the state's community college system.

Pitts says this roundtable group and other college leaders have been most supportive of the Ivy Tech transition to a full community college through articulation agreements, joint programs and other cooperative efforts.

The higher education literature, Harre emphasizes, illustrates that students who make an initial choice of a community college

compared to a four-year school are less likely to eventually graduate. That's where the role of the faculty becomes so important.

"When the student comes in to the faculty person and says, 'Well, I'm going to get my two-year degree,' the faculty person needs to say, 'That's great. But if you're only thinking about a two-year degree, you're being shortsighted. You really should be talking about that four-year degree. I'm going to try and make sure you do well in my class, and my hope is that when you do well that the next decision you'll make is that you're going to get a baccalaureate degree.'"

Harre adds that community colleges have the additional function of offering certificate and other skill-specific programs. He hopes Ivy Tech does not lose that aspect that has been performed in the past. In addition, Pitts emphasizes the important and growing role of degree completion for adults.

Benjamin supports the overall emphasis of the efficiency report.

"I think the state could benefit from some more strategic planning and perhaps some better definition of mission and mission differentiation among institutions in the state," he claims. "I have found that the environment in Indiana for higher education is intensely competitive. With that taking place in a time of dwindling resources, the pressure on institutions is only increased."

Hoops counters that he and Benjamin simply agree to disagree on this point. "I'm a great believer in competition at all levels, including higher education. I think all organizations are at their best when they're in an intensely competitive environment."

Working together

University collaboration is most frequently thought of at the research level. How much do colleges and universities – whether public or private – like those represented in this conversation work together?

Pitts says there are not many incentives in place for that to happen at the university level. "However, if you go faculty member by faculty member, discipline by discipline around the state, you'll find them (collaborations) all over the place. Many of them are informal. Many of them are sub-grants. Many of them are co-collaborations with a business. (People would) be amazed at the expertise that exists around the

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state in any one disciplinary area.”

Harre also estimates there are more such collaborations taking place than most people realize.

Geography typically comes into play for universities as a whole. Valparaiso has two Purdue campuses and one Indiana University location nearby. The leaders of those four campuses, as well as the president of Calumet College of St. Joseph and the chancellor at Ivy Tech, regularly convene to discuss issues of importance to all. An example would be the state of K-12 education in Northwest Indiana and what the colleges and universities can do to enhance teaching abilities.

There is a similar arrangement in the Terre Haute area as universities participate in the Wabash Valley Educational Alliance. Indiana State has also worked in the past on economic development issues with the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, Benjamin says, and continues to look for ways to combine, where appropriate, the business expertise at ISU with the engineering prowess at Rose-Hulman. He believes there is great promise in the future.

While relations are cordial between USI and the University of Evansville, the cultures of the two institutions are dramatically different. There is also the history of USI becoming a public alternative in an area long dominated by the private school. The two do work together on some service projects, Hoops notes, but academic collaborations usually dissolve into a unilateral effort.

“In all honesty, I’d have to say not a whole lot (of collaboration takes place). I’m not very proud of that. I think we’d be better if there were (more).”

Money talks

Participants were asked what the key topics would be if this same conversation was taking place five years from now. Harre says a recent article lists, among others, the changing nature of the student body, global competition in science and engineering and Americans’ relative inability to communicate effectively in multiple languages as the world becomes smaller.

Efficiencies, increased competition, student costs and budgets are some of the other ideas the presidents discuss. Hoops, however, has the final word in succinct style.

“Funding. It has been for the entire history of higher education. I see no reason it’ll change in five years.”

INFORMATION LINK

Resources: Lloyd Benjamin, Indiana State University, at www.indstate.edu

Alan Harre, Valparaiso University, at www.valpo.edu

H. Ray Hoops, University of Southern Indiana, at www.usi.edu

Beverly Pitts, University of Indianapolis, at www.uindy.edu

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