

HIGHER EDUCATION ROLE

PLAN WILL INCREASE NATIONAL PROFILE

“We are convinced that the life sciences area is one of immense opportunity for the state. To capitalize on it, the academic institutions need to take a pivotal role by expanding their research base. We can and want to be players,” professes Dr. Craig Brater, Indiana University vice president of life sciences and dean of the school of medicine.

Last year, with the release of its Indiana Life Sciences Initiative, IU officially set in motion a way to make this happen, to move into the elite echelon of the nation’s research centers. Among the concentrations slated for further development: biology, chemistry, cancer research, neurosciences, and health and wellness.

Brater is quick to point out that it’s really a strategic plan for Indiana, not just Indiana University, as much collaboration is needed.

“We want to capitalize on campuses around the state ... at Purdue, Fort Wayne, Evansville, Southern Indiana. We want to make sure what we do has an impact statewide, not just in Central Indiana. And, we want to do it in a fashion that is of mutual benefit to all of these institutions,” he maintains.

Just how far Indiana climbs the life science ladder depends on its intellectual capital, says Brater.

“We have benchmarked ourselves against places around the country that have really robust life sciences economies – San Diego, the San Francisco Bay area, the Research Triangle area (in North Carolina), etc. We’ve found that our research-oriented faculty is just as productive as they are at the very best places in the country. The only difference is that those places have twice or more of them than we do. It’s a simple numbers game,” he reports.

“We (the collective institutions) need to basically double what we’re doing; that means increasing our head count by about 500 research-oriented faculty over the next decade.” Within the next two years, the target is 100.

More scientists making more discoveries are anticipated to do two things: create better health care solutions and provide for a better overall state economy.

Over the 10-year timeframe of the initiative, Brater puts the necessary investment near \$1 billion, with significant returns that could be measured on several fronts.

“We estimate the amount of new research dollars coming into the state at being \$2.4 billion. If you look at the number of jobs to be created, we estimate that at a minimum of 14,000. If you look at new companies that would be spun out of all that research activity, that would be at least 100 new companies. You would also have about \$100 million in royalties and licensing coming in,” Brater explains.

“As a result, you would generate about an additional \$750 million in income tax revenues, so the net investment by the state would really be only \$250 million (not the full \$1 billion). ... It really is a pretty good bang for your buck.”

While research is at the heart of the Indiana Life Sciences Initiative, Brater notes, “We know we obviously also have a primary responsibility of training the next generation of physicians for the state.”

That mission seems well in hand. IU medical students’ average scores rank them higher than their peers, plus applications to the medical school are increasing annually at a rate 15% higher than the national average.

“Clearly, there is a drumbeat out there that people are listening to. People see what is going on here,” Brater offers. “So we’re getting good students, we’re training them well, and most of them – 57% – are staying in the state.”



Dr. Craig Brater says the Indiana Life Sciences Initiative will require partnerships among the state’s research institutions.

INFORMATION LINK

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Indiana Life Sciences Initiative at <http://lifesciences.iu.edu>