

PAVING THE WAY

Innovative Initiatives Empower Employers, Students

By **Symone C. Skrzycki**

Higher education institutions are constantly designing and igniting new opportunities for students, businesses and others to expand knowledge, pursue unique career paths and make a difference. Hoosier colleges and universities are among those leading the charge.

While we can't feature all the exciting developments unfolding in Indiana within this story, we spotlight a few at the following: University of Indianapolis (UIndy), Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, Butler University and Valparaiso University.

A common theme throughout the disparate initiatives is an emphasis on following one's passions and customizing education to fit individuals' talents and needs.

Step inside each campus to learn more.

UIndy: Stackable MBA program; \$5 Million Gift from alum Stephen F. Fry

Last summer, UIndy introduced the state's first stackable MBA program. Participants earn stackable graduate certificates via a hybrid format.

"What this means is that instead of having to commit to an entire degree program, if there are a few classes that you need to increase your skills, you can just take those. We want to be able to recognize those additional skills that you've gotten (with certificates)," remarks School of Business Dean Karl Knapp.

"Basically, we're grouping together three classes that comprise a complete skillset in one area," he adds. "What that enables us to do is have a mix-and-match MBA. Everyone has to take what we call our business essential certificate (plus one finance class), but they can then choose two other certificates and make an MBA that suits their needs. Whether that's AI and analytics, global supply chain management, leadership, finance or marketing."

Separately, a \$5 million gift from alum Stephen F. Fry will help propel growth at UIndy. Initiatives will revolve around three elements: the Stephen F. Fry Business Scholars Program, Stephen F. Fry Distinguished Lecture Series and Stephen F. Fry Faculty Innovation Fund.

"We'll be awarding scholarships for the Business Scholars Program starting with the fall class of 2025," Knapp notes. "Scholars will (participate) in a cohort and have different experiences that most undergraduates may

not have (through traveling and more). We're really going to be cultivating the next generation of young leaders."

"The intent is that they will also have a significant commitment to serve," he continues. "In exchange for us giving them a scholarship, they're going to have to give back to our community. Service is a big part of the University of Indianapolis."

The Stephen F. Fry Distinguished Lecture Series will attract internationally recognized speakers to campus and the Stephen F. Fry Faculty Innovation Fund will help invest in groundbreaking programs.

Valparaiso University: Power of music therapy

Jordy Novak has carved out a career helping others through her passion for music. She heads up Valparaiso University's music therapy program, which launched in 2019. The offering creates a platform for musicians to fulfill their career callings while making an impact.

"Music therapy is covered on the Indiana Medicaid waiver, which means that individuals with developmental disabilities have access to funds that cover music therapy services," Novak explains. "Music therapy in the state of Indiana is very popular with (the above) population. The school decided to start offering it because it's an emerging (field) and a great opportunity for employment."

Students are classically trained musicians in areas ranging from vocalists and percussionists to guitar players and bassoon players. Curriculum includes an emphasis on psychology courses.

"After you graduate, you do a six-month internship," Novak comments. "You complete 1,200 hours of clinical experience through an internship and practicum experiences. Then you can sit for the board certification exam and get your credentials."

Music therapy professionals apply their skills in settings such as schools, rehabilitation centers, private practice and home health wellness spaces.

"We're bringing music to (clients) in a meaningfully therapeutic way and helping them achieve their personal goals," Novak remarks. "Those personal goals could range from self-expression, communication and coping skills to physical rehabilitation."



The \$5 million gift from UIndy alum Stephen F. Fry will encompass the Stephen F. Fry Business Scholars Program, Stephen F. Fry Distinguished Lecture Series and Stephen F. Fry Faculty Innovation Fund. All will benefit the School of Business and other ventures.



Rose-Hulman’s Innovation Grove District is designed to broaden the entrepreneurial ecosystem and provide new opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience.

Some music therapists devote their talents to neonatal intensive care units.

“Music can be used to help infants regulate their heartbeat and increase their breathing as well as help with bonding with baby and mom or baby and caregiver,” Novak points out. “And it provides respite from the beeps. NICU can be pretty loud and overstimulating. Providing music in a space where there’s noise reduces stress and can help little babies thrive.”

Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology: \$102.3 Million Trails to Innovation venture

Rose-Hulman’s Trails to Innovation project is changing the landscape – literally and figuratively – in Terre Haute.

The effort – funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and various philanthropic, federal, state and community sources – consists of several

elements. Among them is Innovation Grove, a district that will inspire entrepreneurship and technological advancement.

Innovation Grove will house Rose-Hulman Ventures, an engineering consulting and technology design and development firm that’s been a cornerstone of the university for 20-plus years helping students gain hands-on experience working with outside companies on engineering projects.

“Currently, it’s located on a campus about six miles from us,” observes school president Robert Coons. “Moving this facility to our core campus (via a new 35,000-square-foot building) creates access for students in a unique and different way.”

The site also will promote STEM and robotics education programs through a partnership with Vigo County School Corporation. “We’ll have space for middle schoolers to practice robotics and have

smaller competitions,” Coons relays.

A new surgical center for hip and knee replacements will serve the community and train students through a partnership with Union Health and the Indiana Joint Replacement Institute.

“The partnership we’ve established will end up constructing a full-scale ambulatory surgery center adjacent to the (new) Rose-Hulman Ventures building,” Coons remarks. “The real uniqueness for us about that is it will provide our biomedical engineering students with an opportunity at the undergraduate level to observe joint replacement and be engaged in that process.”

Further, the Trails to Innovation effort features Innovation Trail (a network of trails connecting Innovation Grove to Terre Haute’s existing trail system and parks) and a 5-megawatt solar farm.

“Sustainability is one of our strategic objectives as an institution,” Coons asserts. “We want to provide two things with that project: opportunities for our undergraduate students to understand that technology and have firsthand experience with it, and also just signaling to our students our commitment to sustainability and clean energy and with a real-life example here on campus.”

Reflecting on the Trails to Innovation endeavor as a whole, he adds, “We’re really excited about this and think it’s unique not only for Rose-Hulman but in undergraduate STEM education (beyond the institution). We continually look for new ways for students to have hands-on and unique experiences as a part of their undergraduate experience.”

Butler University: Providing paths to worker development

Butler University’s Office of Continuing and Professional Education (OCPE) builds personalized programs for individuals and organizations to promote lifelong learning



Valparaiso University hosted a sensory friendly concert in conjunction with its music therapy program in 2024.

and professional growth. Examples include certifications, customized training with organizations and community events.

Director of continuing and professional education Jacob Moss characterizes the initiative this way: “What are your professional needs? What are your desires – whether they be upskill, reskill, career change – what is your need? Let us partner alongside you to be a value add to your personal life, your organization or your community.”

Butler works with employers, for instance, to create internal talent development pipelines and address their evolving needs.

A recent project focused on designing curriculum for a regional hospital group’s future leaders covering areas such as team building, competitive strategy and change management. One initiative involved partnering with a global medical device company to create an onboarding program for its marketing team.

Another highlight at Butler’s OCPE centers around students applying previous



Butler University’s Office of Continuing and Professional Education is geared toward adult learners, students, employers and communities.

training as Credit for Prior Learning through its Pathways to Degree Completion.

“That program is kind of like an associate’s to bachelor’s program – anyone with 60 eligible credits can take (what we call) block credits,” Moss imparts.

“Essentially, it lets them do their junior and senior years of their bachelor’s degree.

“By applying prior learning using that block credit, we can welcome you to our degree completion program.”

RESOURCES: Robert Coons, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, at www.rose-hulman.edu | Karl Knapp, University of Indianapolis, at www.uindy.edu | Jacob Moss, Butler University, at www.butler.edu | Jordy Novak, Valparaiso University, at www.valpo.edu



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