



MATTHEW RUST

Master Connector

By Anthony Schoettle

Every organization needs an evangelist to spread its word. Matthew Rust, vice president for student navigation and support within Indiana University’s system-wide Office of the Vice President for Student Success, has been such a person for the Indiana Chamber’s Institute for Workforce Excellence (IWE).

“There’s no better way to prepare our students for their careers than to give them real-world experience, and even better if it’s right here in Indiana, which is where we certainly hope a lot of our graduates will stay after they leave IU,” Rust explains. “The Indiana Chamber has been one of the easiest places for us (at IU) to align our missions.”

It’s clear talking to Rust for just a few minutes that he has a deep passion for the students he works with and for helping them find their way into their chosen career paths. He has drawn inspiration from the people who steered him from learning to earning.

“My career success came about because some caring individuals on my college campus were giving me advice, giving me feedback and pointing me in some good directions,” Rust recalls.

“Realizing that I could make a career out of working with

students or in my role now working with the people who are working directly with students to help them make some wise choices and understand how their academics and their academic goals relate to their career goals, that’s been a deeply rewarding career. I really appreciate being able to help students explore those opportunities and make some informed decisions.”

Creating learning-to-earning pathways

Rust previously served as the assistant dean of the University College at IUPUI for nearly 12 years and is a known scholar and leader in academic and career advising. Then in January 2024, he was named the inaugural associate vice president for student navigation and support within IU’s university-wide Office of the Vice President for Student Success – housed on the Bloomington campus.

In his time at IU, Rust has had a heavy focus on work-based learning. He says his duties at IU dovetail nicely with the volunteer work he does for the Indiana Chamber and IWE, where he has been on the governing board and advisory council for nearly a decade.

Rust is a vocal champion and valuable partner most notably for IWE’s Work and Learn Indiana initiative that links employers, learners, high schools and universities around work-based-learning.

“We’ve been able to make sure that the opportunities coming

into the Indiana Chamber’s Work and Learn program are immediately available to (IU) students through our job platform throughout all of our IU campuses,” Rust reports. “It also has allowed us the opportunity to make sure that employers are not frustrated by having to post in multiple places. They’re able to post in one place and seamlessly get those opportunities promoted across IU.

“The Chamber’s commitment to pathways for Hoosiers to move from education into employment provided a ton of important connecting points,” Rust adds. “The job board, that’s obviously a big part of our career services work – the internship related connections there – but there’s also been a number of opportunities to double check our understandings of what the workforce needs are within Indiana and where the gaps are.”

Rust cites an example of how the collaboration goes deeper, into big picture analysis and recommendations.

“We’ve seen some interesting corroboration between what we were hearing in career services from our employer partners matching up with what the Chamber was hearing in their annual employer survey. That offered a number of opportunities to brainstorm around potential solutions that would meet those needs.”

Fortifying Indiana’s talent pipeline

IWE Executive Director Sally Saydshoev believes it’s impossible to truly capture what Rust’s involvement has meant.

“Matt has been instrumental in helping us integrate Work and Learn Indiana into postsecondary institutions’ job board platforms, sharing internships posted on Work and Learn Indiana by employers to third-party job boards at several institutions across the state,” she explains.

“Without Matt leading this effort, we wouldn’t be one of the only states in the country to engage third-party job board platforms. Matt continues to provide his knowledge and expertise to our team related to our relationships with postsecondary institutions and continued strategy priorities on the workforce.”

Rust also has been integral to helping IWE develop programs and curriculum the state’s colleges and universities – and more importantly their students – find valuable.

“Matt is a true leader for us, and he’s also leading some amazing work for IU and really giving thought for how the state moves forward in career navigation,” states Todd Hurst, Indiana Chamber senior vice president, strategic partnerships and impact. “He’s a leading voice, and we’re very fortunate to have him aligned with our organization.”

Rust says his relationship with the



Though soft spoken, Rust never passes up an opportunity to address various groups of students on the merits of pursuing work and learn opportunities.



Throughout his career, Rust has enjoyed engaging directly with students. More recently, he’s turned his attention to mentoring and working with others charged with steering students.

Indiana Chamber is beneficial for both parties.

“Through our technology and other partnerships, (IU) gets a large chunk of internships through the Chamber. There’s a data feed coming out of the Work and Learn job board, feeding it into IU’s job board. It truly is a win-win-win-win because it’s making life easier for employers as well.

“I can’t emphasize enough how committed we are at IU to workforce development and preparing students for what’s next. And what the Chamber provides is a big part of that.”

Above and beyond

Rust’s volunteer efforts aren’t limited to the Indiana Chamber. He’s also on the board at Employ Indy, which serves Marion County, as well as volunteers with Ascend Indiana, which is a separate nonprofit born from the

Central Indiana Corporate Partnership.

He and his wife, Victoria – a financial advisor with Edward Jones in New Palestine – have four children; Elaina, 16, Julia, 13, Wade, 11, and Naomi, eight. Rust notes that he and his wife spend time cheering their children in baseball, softball, gymnastics and show choir.

Additionally, the Rusts served as foster parents for several years and have volunteered for the Children’s Bureau of Indianapolis.

“Service and giving back is a big part of our family,” Rust emphasizes. “We want to give back to our community and home state in any way we can. Using the talents we have for the greater good is an important lesson we want our children to learn and a big part of the legacy we want to leave behind.” ■