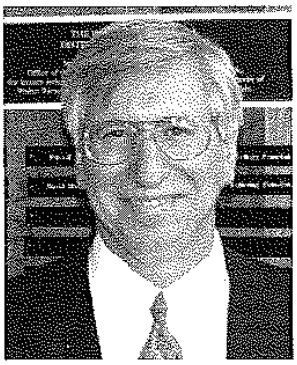
© Journal of Public Service & Outreach, Volume 3, Number 2, pp. 14-25 (1998)



Breaking Down the Walls: Partnerships and Progress in Higher Education

Myles Brand
President
Indiana University

Editor's note: "Breaking Down the Walls" was presented October 23, 1997, at the University of Georgia as part of its third annual Walter Barnard Hill Distinguished Lecture Series. The series was established by UGA Vice President for Public Service and Outreach and JPSO Publisher S. Eugene Younts to highlight leaders in public service and outreach.

It is an honor for me to be at the University of Georgia, a public institution whose history and traditions are even older than Indiana University's. Thirty-one years before the framers of the Indiana Constitution called for a state university that was "equally open to all," Georgia chartered its own university. Today, both institutions carry on a proud legacy of education and research — a legacy that has made America's colleges and universities famous around the world.

This is the first time I have had the pleasure of being on the Georgia campus. I have been looking forward to this visit, especially now as you begin the year with a new president. On behalf of the entire IU community, I bring greetings and best wishes to President Michael Adams.

I am very pleased to deliver the third Walter Barnard Hill Lecture. It not only celebrates the life of Chancellor Hill, but also brings to the fore one of the most dynamic opportunities now facing the nation's great public research universities: how to reach out to their communities and how to better serve their constituents. I surmise that were he here today, Chancellor Hill would be an avid participant in any discussion regarding the promise of partnerships. He was deeply interested in innovation and modernization, and he was dedicated to the university's public service "calling."

We at Indiana University also believe strongly in the service mission of public universities. We have made it one of the central parts of our Strategic Directions Charter, which is our road map into the twenty-first century. Before I tell you more about the charter, let

me give you a brief overview of the historical context that led to its creation.

Americans have long held education in high esteem. Almost two centuries ago Thomas Jefferson proclaimed that "Knowledge is power. . . . Knowledge is safety. . . . Knowledge is happiness." More than one hundred years later, Margaret Mead argued that "children must be taught how to think, not what to think" (Maggio 1996, 205). Lyndon Johnson, amid the turbulence of the 1960s, observed that "the world is engaged in a race between education and chaos" (Frost 1988, 74).

Americans have consistently looked to the pursuit of knowledge as the foundation of our culture and our future. Prior to World War II, however, college enrollment remained relatively low, even though respect for a college degree was high. And then, the G.I. Bill was passed. Thousands of returning veterans — men and some women — took advantage of the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 and poured onto the nation's campuses. The student population increased dramatically, from 1.5 million before the war to 5.9 million in 1965 and to 14.3 million in 1995.

Another figure paints an equally dramatic picture: Before the war, only fifteen percent of high school graduates went on to post-secondary education. Today, when you take two-year institutions into account, that figure is well over sixty percent. In addition to the G.I. Bill, there was another factor leading to the academy's burgeoning growth after World War II. I speak of the contributions that research universities made to the national defense. At Michigan Institute of Technology, there were breakthroughs in the use of radar, and at Columbia University and the universities of California and Chicago, among others, there was the Manhattan Project.

After the war, the United States continued to invest heavily in research at its universities, in contrast to other developed countries that looked to the corporate or governmental sectors — or both — to assume responsibility for research. Between the influx of students and the flow of research dollars, higher education enjoyed a Golden Age from about 1958 to 1968. The public-university sector, in particular, grew dramatically. Before the war, about half of America's college students were attending private universities, with the other half at public institutions. Today, close to eighty percent of students are enrolled in public [institutions of] higher education.

The country's great research universities, including the University of Georgia and Indiana University, shored up their foundations during the Golden Era. It was an exciting time of what seemed to be unlimited promise. But higher education took a downward turn economically in the late 1960s. The spiral was spurred in part by the social upheaval surrounding the Vietnam War and by changes in the country's financial circumstances. As I hardly need tell you, one key variable in the support of public higher education is the state of the economy.

The fiscal downturn persisted through the '70s, although student access and interest continued to rise. In fact, things seemed to turn

around yet again in the early '80s. Federal investment in research resumed, students flocked to campuses, and many institutions thrived. But at this point, some institutions of higher education began to build walls around themselves. Insulated from their constituents, many became less conscious of the concerns, and less sensitive to the needs of the very people they were dedicated to serving. So when the recession of the early '90s occurred, higher education found itself bereft of its traditional advocates. Unhappy critics, some of whom still blamed higher education for the upheaval of the '60s, said the institution had become irrelevant, arrogant, inefficient, and unaccountable.

. . . When the recession of the early '90s occurred, higher education found itself bereft of its traditional advocates. Unhappy critics, some of whom still blamed higher education for the upheaval of the '60s, said the institution had become irrelevant, arrogant, inefficient, and unaccountable.

And there was yet another force at play. When America won the Cold War, it lost a common enemy. With the elimination of a realistic threat to our national security, we as a nation turned our energy inward. Unfortunately, we have not always used this self-reflective movement as an opportunity to address deep social problems, such as race relations or the growing disenfranchisement of the lower economic classes. Instead, at times, we have followed a more indulgent path. We turned a judgmental eye on our own political, economic, and academic institutions, higher education among them. To the extent these institutions have failed to regulate and improve themselves, criticism is justified. But when this disapproval expresses the frustration of the critics on other issues, it is counterproductive and self-defeating.

A parallel trend is further complicating higher education's position. Increasingly, Americans are focusing on their immediate well-being, and many seem to have turned their backs on long-term community values and goals. A new, self-centered version of "rugged individualism" is taking precedence over advocacy for the common good. One of the results is a diminished willingness to support, through public funds, those institutions that seek to serve the community and future generations. And yet, at the same time, there is a growing realization that almost everyone needs higher education to succeed — that a college degree provides the crucial advantage in the contemporary work force.

Today's careers — and tomorrow's — draw a line between the educational haves and have-nots. Lest you think I speak only of opportunities in today's hot fields — technology and information systems — let me hasten to point out that I am referring to the entire labor force. That's because communities do not live by software or biotechnology alone. A thriving community needs teachers, doctors, lawyers, entrepreneurs, ministers, accountants, small business workers, and skilled tradespeople, just for starters.

In fact, the Department of Labor predicts that professional specialty occupations will increase fastest and add the most jobs — more than five million — by 2005 (U.S. Department of Labor 1991). The number of executive, administrative, and managerial occupations is also expected to grow at faster-than-average rates. The people who will stake out the vast majority of those [professional] careers will need college degrees. And, the public has come to recognize a fact of economic life: that the earning power of a college graduate is significantly higher than that of a non-grad.

According to the U.S. Census, a high school graduate who works from the time he or she is twenty-five years old to the time he or she turns sixty-four, will earn about $800,000. Compare that to the college grad with a bachelor's degree. Over the same period of time, the grad will make, on average, about $1.4 million (U. S. Census Bureau 1992). What's more, the college grad is one-half as likely to be unemployed as the non-grad. While this additional earning power is attractive to those who see higher education as a means to attain their personal goals, it also serves another purpose. The additional income gives its recipients an opportunity to benefit future generations and advance the common good.

. . . Higher education has become the victim of its own success. We have raised expectations about our ability to lead the nation's economic development and help improve the quality of life. Now we must deliver.

In many ways, higher education has become the victim of its own success. We have raised expectations about our ability to lead the nation's economic development and help [to] improve the quality of life. Now we must deliver.

Additionally, higher education in this country is big business — $200 billion a year by some estimates — and there are those in the for-profit sector who want some of the action. Given these forces — the expectations, the criticism, the competition, the increasing focus on self-reliance — what is higher education to do?

The worst possible reaction is to become defensive. Doing so can lead to elitism and insularity. A better response is to take seriously

the legitimate criticisms, rationally rebut those that stem merely from ideology, and initiate reforms where they are needed. Each university must carve out its own path, based on its own culture, values, and traditions. Indiana University's approach centered on the development of a Strategic Directions Charter, which in large part was a reform document.

The "Strategic Directions Charter: Becoming America's New Public University" began as an idea that I proposed in my 1994 State of the University address. As I told the faculty on that September day, IU's traditions and history, its core values, and its sound position in the state all pointed toward one right course: to embrace and renew the university's public commitment. In this, of course, IU was not alone. I believed then, as I do now, that the nation's public colleges and universities must become more integral to their home states. In reshaping themselves, all must build on — not abandon — past successes, and enhance their state role, enhance their partnerships with the corporate sector, and enhance their cooperative and collaborative relationships with other constituencies. It is one thing to say this. It is quite another to mobilize an entire university community to bring it about. And make no mistake: the effort will surely fail if it does not involve a majority of the university community, especially the faculty.

[I would advise] an institution about to embark on this sort of long-range planning process . . . [to address two primary concerns]. First, use a grass-roots approach instead of a top-down framework. At IU, we established eight university-wide task forces, made up of more than 250 faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community leaders. The goal was to create a plan that represented all aspects of the academy. It took months of discussion, drafting, and redrafting; the process was, at times, messy and volatile. But it was the only way to truly involve the entire university as it charted its own future.

My second piece of advice is this: Allocate resources to achieve the goals you set forth. At my own university, we are "seeding" change by channeling substantial funds to meet our objectives. I would expect most institutions to arrive at a broad array of goals. Some goals, undoubtedly, will reinforce core missions, such as undergraduate education and research. Others might underscore various aspects of university life, such as ensuring that campus grounds and facilities properly reflect the pride of the university. Yet others might emphasize the need to operate the institution in the most efficient, effective, and accountable manner possible. I can speculate — but only you can determine what your campus goals will be.

At IU, no recommendation in our charter is more important than that which states that Indiana University must strengthen existing partnerships and create new ones with the schools, businesses, government agencies, and other external groups.

Outreach, of course, is a known quantity at IU, UGA, and many of the country's leading colleges and universities. But in the past, such efforts — especially those in the 1980s — stressed teaching and

research. While both remain absolutely critical, we must now give added weight to our roles as active and enthusiastic partners in our states. I believe we all must think of ourselves as *America's New Public Universities.* I do not invoke this title lightly. Rather, it represents an important aspect of our mission. By "American," I call attention to the fact that American higher education is now clearly the best in the world. In fact, we are the superpower. The Institute of International Education reports that for every American student who goes abroad to study during the academic year, ten come here (Davis 1996). [Students] come from Asia, from Europe, and from all developing countries, and, once here, they spent more than $7 billion in the last year alone. Few industries can claim such a large positive balance of payments.

I believe that the very future of public higher education largely depends upon our progress in breaking down the walls that would separate us from our constituents and the world outside the campus.

Why do they come in such numbers? Because they know that in the United States, higher education is qualitatively superior and open to all who are academically qualified. We should take pride in that and, more important, we must sustain it.

The "new" in the title, *America's New Public University,* refers to our aggressive strides to be more efficient and effective. We understand and respect the financial constraints that face everyone these days. We have heard and are responding to the soaring demands to be more accountable, and we are doing our utmost to deliver the highest-value education available. But, let me quickly add that "new" does not mean giving up our traditions and values. We must sustain those traditions and values through the process of change.

The "public" in *America's New Public University* is crucial. A public university has a very special obligation to assure students a high-quality education based upon their natural ability and motivation, not their family wealth. Accessability should be our hallmark. The word "public" also refers to the role we play in our hometowns, our states, and our country. We must be active and committed neighbors, so interwoven in the tapestry of our communities that you can't tell where the university ends and the community begins.

This brings me to the heart of the matter. I believe that the very future of public higher education largely depends upon our progress in breaking down the walls that would separate us from our constituents and the world outside the campus. Fortunately, we can

start by building upon longstanding and valuable practices already in place at most campuses. One of those is volunteerism. Volunteer activities include faculty and staff, but mostly center on student service learning. An example is America Reads, the Clinton Administration program in which college students earn work-study monies in exchange for helping school-age children [to] improve their reading skills.

IU has been involved with service learning in a major way, in part through Campus Compact, the national consortium of colleges, iterated at the state level, that seeks to cultivate in students a lifelong commitment to public service. I am an advocate of Campus Compact, and I was pleased to learn that UGA is a member. I was also extremely interested in your "Communiversity." As the largest student volunteer organization on the UGA campus, it is surely adding weight to your efforts to partner with Athens.

Volunteer service contributes a dynamic dimension to a college education, with benefits that enhance the learning experience and set a pattern for committed citizenship throughout life. Not only does volunteerism provide direct and tangible benefits to the community; it also establishes a pattern that many students will take with them when they graduate. Volunteerism is a traditional approach to breaking down the walls between academe and the larger community. A newer avenue is to be found in partnerships between business and research.

When you think about it, this is a natural alliance. The university is a fount of discovery and innovation. Research and creative activity give rise to new ideas, many of which are extremely beneficial to our society. Furthermore, because we are accustomed to dealing with ideas that are startling in their originality, we are often able to see their true potential long before others do. What we have not always been as good at is translating great ideas into viable products or useful commodities. At IU, we created the Advanced Research and Technology Institute — ARTI to its friends — to facilitate technology transfer and joint ventures between corporate and university sectors.

Of course, tech-transfer is hardly a new concept, but it needs to be done well and aggressively. That is why we established this institute, a private, not-for-profit corporation that enjoys a degree of flexibility not always possible at the university. It provides the business and corporate worlds with an easily identifiable point of contact at IU. ARTI is also playing a key role in the drafting of strong policies governing such difficult areas as the ownership of intellectual property and licensing arrangements.

ARTI is involved in the search for solutions to some of the stickier questions that arise. How should we license software, for example, and should the university take an equity position in companies created from the faculty's intellectual property? My answer to the latter, incidentally, is yes, though not without fully exploring all of the possible pitfalls, such as the appearance of conflict of interest, issues involving tenure and promotion, and the role of graduate students.

Of course, successful partnerships are a two-way street. The corporate sector, too, must be open to new ways of doing business, [and] to new partners. What is needed is a robust approach that extends considerably the breadth of such joint ventures. Commerce and college should be each other's customers and, under the right circumstances, each other's partners.

Universities also should seek additional opportunities in the sale of their educational services. For example, we might seek to engage in distance-education opportunities, not only through our continuing-studies programs, but also in cooperation and partnership with the for-profit sector, involving, for instance, those corporations that are using on-site education. We in higher education must be as entrepreneurial and as creative as any industry.

Relatedly, universities should seek to enhance partnerships and respond to marketplace opportunities. That is what IU did, for example, when we consolidated our teaching hospitals with Methodist hospitals in Indianapolis to form a new entity called Clarian Health. By partnering, rather than attempting to maintain full ownership and control, Indiana University is able to provide more effective medical care at competitive prices. Doing so enables us to sustain and, indeed, enhance the quality of our medical school — the only one in our state — and to continue to advance the frontiers in medical research. Importantly, this consolidation also contributes to the combined development of health-care industries in Indianapolis and throughout Indiana. The main lesson here is that universities need not own the entire enterprise to meet their mission goals.

Commerce and college should be each other's customers and, under the right circumstances, each other's partners.

Yet another vibrant arena of partnership is in the field of K-12 education. True, we have a natural partnership in the fact that we educate the teachers. But higher education can and should be doing much more. We also should be involved in curriculum development and school restructuring, and we should be demonstrating applications of research in fields such as cognitive science, learning theory, and motivational psychology. One of the most important things we can do is offer continuing professional development for teachers and administrators.

These are difficult times for teachers. Gone are the days when one curriculum fit all and long-held assumptions were taken for granted. Today, as you well know, teachers must juggle an exploding knowledge base, information overload, and technological innovation that is occurring at a dizzying pace. And they are also often coping with many students who are living with conditions that are hardly

conducive to learning — conditions that include domestic violence, disease, drug and alcohol abuse, and poverty. As a result, classroom behavioral problems have multiplied and intensified.

Never has the need for continuing professional development been more urgent, and we can provide it. The potential returns are substantial. Not only will teachers be better equipped to promote student learning, they will produce better-educated students who are more likely to play constructive roles as citizens and are less susceptible to social alienation. Better-educated individuals tend to hold jobs, pay taxes, vote, purchase homes, join community activities, and generally, contribute to the state's well-being.

Teachers aren't the only ones who are interested in continuing education. Indeed, there is a growing demand for lifelong learning, a demand that will serve us in good stead if we take advantage of it. Universities that persist in treating learning as an on-campus endeavor would do well to take note of these figures:

In 1972, just twenty-eight percent of U.S. college and university students were over twenty-five; by 1994, the proportion of older students had reached forty-two percent. The non-traditional student population is expected to grow at an even more rapid rate. Additionally, there are projections that workforce demands alone will add twenty million students early in the coming century — more than double the total enrollment in universities today (Education Resources Institute and Institute for Higher Education Policy 1996). As the number of non-traditional and returning students continues to grow, there will be a concurrent demand for ongoing education. Distance education and professional education are going to help break down the walls between the professional world and the academic world.

Finally, higher education should be looking for opportunities to create mutually beneficial partnerships with the government and public sector. In fact, never have collaborative efforts been more important. Financial resources are limited and creative solutions to complex problems are urgently needed. Colleges and universities must continue their research on public policy, but that research should focus on practical issues that governments and not-for-profit organizations face. Theory supports practice; but theory for its own sake does not serve these required purposes.

In addition to developing policy, universities should do part of the work through students engaged in internships and direct faculty involvement. And this brings me to two important areas of concern. Sometimes, faculty members harbor serious reservations about the implications of outreach efforts and partnerships. Some fear both will be achieved at the expense of scholarly and research activity.

But I believe just the opposite is true. In fact, [outreach and scholarship] go hand in hand; indeed, they are inseparable in practice. A campus that has truly outstanding scholars and research has an advantage in outreach and partnerships and, indeed, in creating spinoff companies that benefit the region and the state, as well as the university.

There is a second issue and it is this: I believe that many in the academy are eager to become involved in such partnerships, but fear the reaction of their colleagues. The key point of resistance to partnerships is, in fact, cultural. Faculty groups tend to value research and teaching more than professional service. This is apparent when faculty committees recommend rewards — merit pay, for example — or make recommendations on promotion and tenure without giving sufficient credit to outreach activities.

We must address these issues. University leadership must work with faculty groups to provide recognition for these efforts. Administrative leadership can be very helpful here, as can directives from governing boards. Without solving the problem of cultural change, partnerships will not become part of the ethos of the institution. And that failure will exact too steep a penalty. We must enact partnerships: We must break down the walls between the academy and the community. We must show external stakeholders that we want to be — and can be — active contributors to the economic well-being of the state and the nation.

Here is how a campus can begin the process:

- Step One: *Undertake long-range or strategic planning.* Without specific goals, one is just spinning wheels. Step One in the process is an environmental scan to determine what partnerships are already in effect and where the points of resistance are within the university.
- Step Two: *Set realistic but aggressive goals* after identifying the needs and opportunities of the community and the state. . . . [F]or public universities, outreach and partnerships are primarily local and state issues.
- Step Three: *Develop a game plan* to get from here to there. It's tough; it's time consuming; it's expensive. But it is the only way to make progress. Not only must every effort be made to achieve grass-roots buy-in, the process must be designed to change an ethos that undervalues service. Unless the institution is willing and able to attach rewards to this effort, faculty will not take it seriously. Although ideas about how to serve our communities and our society must come from faculty, staff, and students, leadership in affirming the worth of service must come from the top of the university organization, and it must be accepted by all levels of academic administration.
- Step Four: *Identify and work with external champions.* Nothing one does internally will matter unless there are willing external partners in the business community, state government, and the schools. The challenge here is to find deep and lasting relationships; unless there is a high-level, organized effort, the results will be superficial.

The leaders of higher education in Virginia can attest to the value of external champions. Throughout the early '90s, Virginia's colleges and universities were hit — and hit hard — with a series of devastating budget cuts. [The cuts] began under then-Governor L. Douglas Wilder, a Democrat, and continued under his successor, George Allen, a Republican. By 1995, what had been known as one of

the country's most respected state systems had one of the lowest rates of state per-pupil support in the nation. It also had one of the highest rates of in-state tuition. When Gov. Allen proposed another $47-million-cut, a group calling itself the Virginia Business-Higher Education Council sprang into action.

The council is made up of some of the most influential business people in the state. All were deeply concerned that the drastic cuts were gutting Virginia's higher education. They feared that a college degree was becoming inaccessible to all but the wealthiest students. Council members also warned that deep cuts in college aid were seriously hurting economic-development efforts and were having a negative impact on Virginia's workforce. The group's very public opposition came as a serious blow to the governor's program. But more important was the coup that the council achieved when it persuaded three former governors to sign a letter deploring the cuts to higher education. The letter was made public on February 1st. Governor Allen's tax-cut program perished in the General Assembly the next day.

Since then, the council has been relentless in its efforts on behalf of higher education. Just three weeks ago, it issued a twenty-page report making the case for almost $1 billion in additional higher education spending over the next two years. The council's goal is a first-class university system, not a merely "adequate" one. In return, it expects nothing less than economic prosperity. Give and take: This is the lifeblood of successful partnerships — the kind of partnerships higher education must forge as it looks toward the twenty-first century.

If I were building a university today, I would begin by laying a sturdy foundation of higher education's finest traditions: dedication to learning; commitment to excellence; and devotion to scholarship, creative activity, and discovery. I would erect windows instead of walls and I would install doors by the hundreds. Finally, I would ban all towers — even ones of ivy-covered brick — and I would order a network of two-way streets leading into and out of the heart of the institution. I believe that if Indiana University and the University of Georgia and all of America's great public institutions of higher learning are going to thrive in the future, they must become not more private, but more public. They must be the first place people turn — and the last — in the search for creative solutions to their most pressing needs.

Our goal should be to make our constituents feel as comfortable in our front yards as in their own. But we must not stop there. We, too, must venture forth and become active participants in the world around us. The message that we must convey is that we are not merely oases of studied intellectual reflection; we are also a vital life force contributing to change, growth, and innovation. We are not isolated islands; we want to work together to develop a common vision to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Our traditions and history, our core values and our sound positions in our home states, all point toward one right course. It is up to us to take the next step into a new era in our history in which public universities find new and energetic ways to enlarge and fulfill their public responsibilities. ■

References

Davis, T. M. 1996. Open doors 1995/96. Report on international education. Institute of International Education.

Education Resources Institute and Institute for Higher Education Policy. 1996. Life after 40.

Frost, E., ed. 1988. *The bully pulpit.* New York: Facts on File Publications.

Maggio, R., ed. 1996. *The new Beacon book of quotations by women.* Boston: Beacon Press.

United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 1991. *Occupational Outlook Quarterly.* Fall.

United States Census Bureau. 1993. *Education attainment in the United States.* Washington.

About the Author

Myles Brand (Ph.D., University of Rochester) has been president of Indiana University since 1989. He holds a faculty appointment in the department of philosophy at Indiana University-Bloomington and continues to teach, attend conferences, and publish. He serves on a number of boards, including those of national higher-education associations.

Dr. Brand served as chairman of the philosophy departments at the University of Illinois-Chicago and the University of Arizona, and led both those departments to national top-ten positions. He was provost and vice president for academic affairs at Ohio State University and president of the University of Oregon. In his leadership roles he emphasizes quality undergraduate education and a dynamic balance between teaching and faculty research.