

To: Fort Wayne Senate
From: Educational Policy Committee
Date: February 14, 1990
Subject: Sustaining access to high-quality education

Disposition: To the Chancellor for implementation

The commitments of Indiana University and Purdue University to provide general access to high-quality postsecondary education were greatly extended by the founding of the several regional campuses of the two universities. Certainly Indiana University-Purdue University at Fort Wayne (IPFW), founded 25 years ago, has been constant in its commitment to educating adults of all ages and circumstances. At IPFW today nontraditional students constitute some two-thirds of the headcount, and they enroll for about one-half of the credit hours. But this is not a new situation. Nontraditional students--students who attend school part-time, students who are older than 22 years, and students who are heads of households--have always been the majority at IPFW.

The challenge of educating nontraditional students stems from the major conflicts with and distractions from school that they experience. Many are admitted with academic deficiencies. Many have uncertain educational objectives. Many are strained by the need to be financially independent. Many are anxious about the adoption of new roles. Slow progress toward educational goals, due to part-time and discontinuous registration, breeds frustration among even the bright and well-motivated.

IPFW has pioneered means of seizing the opportunities that the nontraditional student presents and is experienced in adapting educational policy and pedagogy to a diverse student body. Now that this student population is so large nationally--50% of the 13 million students in American higher education--others are responding too. Indeed, the intention of universities nationwide--even residential campuses in nonurban settings--to respond coherently and forthrightly is signified by redesignating nontraditional students as the "New Majority," an act of adoption.

The coincidence of nationwide recognition of the New Majority with IPFW's 25th anniversary suggests a reaffirmation of the commitments of Indiana University and Purdue University to provide general access to a high-quality university education in northeastern Indiana.

Therefore, be it resolved, That IPFW reaffirm its commitments to New Majority students:

1. By recognizing research on topics related to the education of these students,--for example, attitudes toward postsecondary education, learning styles, access, retention, and assessment--as areas of professional activity leading to promotion and tenure
2. By supporting research on topics related to the education of these students--directly, through IPFW-sponsored research grants and summer faculty fellowships for research; and indirectly, by encouraging the development of grant proposals for submission to external agencies
3. By facilitating faculty and staff professional-development activities by sponsoring seminars and workshops related to educating these students, and by underwriting travel to such gatherings elsewhere

4. By encouraging presentation of evidence about adaptation of instruction to these students in personnel and department annual reports and in promotion and tenure dossiers
5. By encouraging the continued expansion of services and service hours necessitated by the personal and academic constraints imposed upon these students
6. By fostering among campus personnel, especially academic advisors, knowledge of the support services available to these students--for example, transitional studies, the women and returning adult students' center, child care, financial aid, the minority affairs office, and the career counseling and testing center
7. By continuing to review the appropriateness of IPFW's academic policies and programs to these students
8. By ensuring the appropriateness of student affairs policies and programs to promoting the general social, cultural, and practical welfare of these students
9. By promoting further contact between faculty and these students through faculty participation in curricular and noncurricular programs.