

# SCHOOL ASSEMBLY

## Wabash Valley education leaders discuss collaboration, economic impact

By Sue Loughlin

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Vigo County education leaders focused on collaborative efforts and economic impact Thursday during an Education Update hosted by the Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce.

The program took place at Terre Haute North Vigo High School.

Speakers were Chris Himsel, Vigo County School Corp. superintendent; Mike Godard, Indiana State University president; Rob Coons, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology president; Brennan Randolph, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College interim president; and Lea Anne Crooks, Ivy Tech Terre Haute chancellor.

The presentation was not open to the public, but a video of the program is available on the Chamber's YouTube site.

"All five of us are partnering and collaborating on trying to make things better for our kids," Himsel said after the program. "We are trying to figure out ways of not only drawing people into the Wabash Valley, but keeping them here so we can grow the community, grow the economy, and provide even more benefits for those who choose to live here."

The education leaders communicate regularly to talk about how they can collaborate. "I think we're going to have even more announcements in the future about potential partnerships," he said.



A new Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology residence hall, seen here on Thursday, is the first new freshmen residence hall to be built since 1962. The four-story, \$30 million structure will be ready for occupancy in fall 2025.



ISU displayed a rendering for its \$66 million renovation/expansion project involving the Bailey College of Engineering and Technology.

Submitted



Lea Anne Crooks, Ivy Tech Terre Haute chancellor, talks about plans for a \$67 million new building and renovation project, which would require approval of the Indiana General Assembly.

Submitted photo

School

Funding sources are a READI grant; Vigo County ARPA federal funds; city of Terre Haute ARPA funds; and Lilly Endowment.

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods

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Randolph, SMWC interim president, highlighted that the total enrollment at the college has grown over 30% in the

Kristin Craig, Chamber executive director, said the goal of the update was to show “the breadth of the educational assets we have in our community and how collaborative they are.”

VCSC and the colleges play a major role in meeting local workforce and economic development needs.

When Chamber officials go to other parts of the state, “They are incredibly jealous that we have these amazing education assets in our community. We are unique in that way. I think it’s something we don’t take enough pride in,” Craig said.

Looking at overall impact on the community for 2023-2024, the five institutions collectively had 32,061 students enrolled and 4,751 employees resulting in \$256.7 million in total payroll.

“That makes education one of the biggest economic drivers in our community by far,” Craig said.

Coons said that in terms of recruiting faculty and staff to Rose-Hulman, “It’s really critical we have a healthy K-12 system. Anything we can do as a collaborative between the four colleges and K-12 to help our K-12 system and be supportive, is something I’m really a fan of.”

Vigo County School Corp.

Himsel spoke of the district’s efforts to improve teacher pay to help attract new teachers. Starting pay was raised from \$40,000 to \$46,500 last year and it will be \$48,000 this fall.

The salary upgrades have made a significant difference in teacher recruitment, he said.

Also, the district is working to “rectify past neglect of buildings,” Himsel said.

It is using general obligation bonds to address maintenance and repair needs.

The project, which will increase child care capacity and provide more experiences for education students in the next-door Bayh College of Education, is slated for completion in summer 2025.

Godard noted that ISU has graduated 8,900 students in the past three years, and 64% of the Class of 2023 has remained in Indiana.

He also told the audience that ISU wants to increase partnerships with local business/industry. “We want students job ready when they graduate,” Godard said. “We need to learn from you how we can improve on that.”

ISU also wants to expand experiential learning opportunities; have a renewed focus on public/private partnerships; and create more opportunities for community engagement for athletic events.

Rose Hulman

Coons said Rose-Hulman’s enrollment was 2,250 students in fall of 2023, with students coming from 46 states and 30 countries.

Targeted total enrollment is 2,400, he said. “We’ve had a bit of a growth spurt the last few years.”

The college wants to maintain a personalized education experience, which is why its enrollment target remains at 2,400.

The graduating class of 2023 had a 99% placement rate, he said, and a \$79,126 average starting salary. About 30% of graduates stay in Indiana to work or study, and the college would like to increase that number.

He noted that if students have positive internship experiences in the state, they are more likely to stay.

Innovation Grove, located on the former Hulman property, will feature relocation of Rose-Hulman Ventures and house a new outpatient surgery Center, a partnership with Union

past five years, from 1,100 in 2019-20 to 1,457 in 202324. That includes on campus, Woods Online and graduate students.

Also, Mindful College Connections is a consortium of counseling centers from DePauw University, Rose-Hulman, and Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College. It is a partnership approach to student mental health, funded through the Lilly Endowment.

It has provided greater resources for the college to meet the mental health needs of students, which is a growing challenge, Randolph said.

“It has absolutely changed the ability to meet those needs and to positively impact retention of our students,” he said.

Services have included tele-health, individual counseling, psychiatric services and a 24-7 crisis hotline. Campuses also have a full-time clinical mental health counselor.

Education Update sponsors were Duke Energy and the Vigo County Teachers Association.

A video of the presentation can be found at: <https://bit.ly/3SxaZ5a>



ISU President Mike Godard discusses the university’s community collaboration efforts during Thursday’s Education Update hosted by the Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce.

Submitted photo

In addition, a district-wide updated facility study is underway, and community feedback will be sought later this year; it addresses all schools, including high schools. It will be based on post-COVID market conditions.

In another initiative, the district is implementing a “high reliability schools” model as its continuous improvement framework. Components include ensuring a welcoming environment for students and families; effective teaching and a systemic process for professional development; and focusing on academic standards essential for student success. Staff training is underway.

Many good things are happening in the school district. “Our job is to figure out how to make it more systemic” and build on what is working,

Himsel said.

#### Indiana State University

President Mike Godard spoke of two capital improvement projects being undertaken.

One is the \$66 million expansion/renovation of the Bailey College of Engineering and Technology, which “we’re just initiating right now,” he said. The project is state funded and will add 25,000 square feet to existing facilities.

The project calls for renovating and expanding the Technology Annex, built in 1980, to modernize space for a Center for Technology, Engineering and Design.

It will be about a two-year project. Another project is the \$9.8 million renovation of the Chestnut Building, former nursing building, to house the Early Childhood Education Development Center.

#### Health and the Indiana Joint Replacement Institute.

A new residence hall visible from U.S. 40 is under construction. It’s the first new freshmen residence hall to be built since the 1962. The four-story, \$30 million structure will be ready for occupancy in fall 2025.

#### Ivy Tech

Ivy Tech’s Crooks talked about moving forward with a \$67 million capital request for the 2025 legislative session. Local officials will go before the Ivy Tech state board next week with the hopes of making it the statewide college’s top priority for capital funding.

The project would involve a new, two-story building that would house student services and many in-demand educational programs. It would be about 78,000 square feet.

The existing two-story building on the north side of the main campus would undergo an extensive renovation to house health sciences and nursing programs.

The project would require approval by the Indiana General Assembly. If approved and everything went smoothly, construction/renovation would occur in 2025-2027 with completion in 2028. In addition, Ivy Tech is partnering with Rose-Hulman on the Battery Workforce Challenge to design, build, test and integrate an advanced EV battery pack into a Stellantis vehicle.

Ivy Tech is involved in the fabrication/manufacturing side, and Rose-Hulman on the engineering side, she said.



The Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce on Thursday hosted an Education Update, with local education leaders discussing collaborative efforts, economic impact and individual institution initiatives.

Sue Loughlin/Tribune-Star