

CHANCELLOR'S COMMENTS
COMMENCEMENT 2009
MAY 11, 2009

Commencement is a true crowning event for our graduates and their families. Our students have earned an Indiana University degree that will benefit them for the rest of their lives. They have sacrificed and worked hard, and today they should celebrate.

It is the historic mission of the University to provide opportunity... even in immensely challenging times. And today, many Americans are struggling with an economy that is unpredictable and trying. In the midst of our world's current uncertainties, I am proud that IU Southeast is accessible and affordable for our students. Our university and its graduates have made

an enormous impact on our area. In fact, the vast majority of all IU Southeast alumni- nearly 90 percent - continue to live in the state of Indiana and the greater Louisville region.

As the only comprehensive, public university in the southeast quadrant of Indiana, IU Southeast is dedicated to providing educational opportunity to our regional community. To do this, our campus continues to evolve. This past Fall, we opened our first-ever student housing which is already at a 96% occupancy rate for Fall 09. Our new Honors Program has been a great success, and our new informatics and criminal justice majors are thriving. Moreover, *The Princeton Review* has ranked our School of Business fifth in the

nation for Best Classroom Experience, and our MBA program was recently named among the best part-time MBA programs in the nation by *BusinessWeek*.

We are preparing our students well for their life after graduation.

Today, however, I want to focus on our newest alumni, who stand before me decked out in their caps and gowns.

IU Trustees and special guests, it is my distinct honor to present to you the IU Southeast Class of 2009. Let me tell you just a bit about this extraordinary group of graduates:

- 221 have earned a master's degree
- 717 have earned a bachelor's degree

- 104 have earned associate degrees

For you non-math majors, that adds up to 1,042 graduates. Together with the 44 Purdue University School of Technology students who received degrees at a separate ceremony, the 1,086 students of the Class of 2009 make up the largest graduating class in IU Southeast history, and the third largest class to ever graduate from an IU regional campus.

The Indiana-Kentucky tuition reciprocity program is reflected in this class. One third of its members come from the Kentucky counties of Jefferson, Bullitt, Oldham, and Trimble, the four counties that benefit from the reciprocity agreement.

Also, 22 Indiana counties are represented by this year's graduates.

Members of this class range in age from 20 to 70.

- Thirty-four percent are age 24 and under.
- Twenty-eight percent are 25 to 29;
- Twenty-two percent are 30 to 39;
- 7 percent are in their 40's;
- and almost 4 percent are in their 50's, 60's, and 70's.

As you can clearly see, it is indeed never too late to continue your formal education.

Commencement is a truly distinctive event for the families and friends of our graduates. A majority of today's graduates are in the first generation of their families to earn a college degree, and many are the very first in their family to become a college graduate.

The families in the audience today have witnessed the ups and downs of the journey a student takes to earn a degree. They have seen the struggles and the triumphs.

There are so many outstanding graduates I wish to praise this afternoon. However, as individual as they are, they have one thing in common - what Clarence Birdseye called "stick-to-it-iveness."

This class truly embodies persistence and hard work. For those who are receiving undergraduate degrees, 82 percent completed their work in six years or less. The other 16 percent pursued their academic goals at a more leisurely pace. Five of today's graduates began their studies at IU Southeast in the 1970s. Perseverance does pay off!

Many graduates have participated in applied learning initiatives, as evidenced by the over 187 student participants in our undergraduate research conference this year. These experiences will serve them especially well as they go on to graduate and professional schools.

To say our students are hard-workers is an understatement. The vast majority of tonight's graduates worked in part-time or full-time jobs while earning their college education, and many were raising families as well.

One of the fascinating statistics about this class is the number of men and women. Only 34 percent are male and 66 percent are female. These numbers clearly reflect a growing national trend and represent the many opportunities open for women today.

Moreover, our class shows a high degree of satisfaction with this campus. In a recent survey, 97 percent agreed with the statement that "IU Southeast offers a high-quality academic program." And 94 percent said they would "encourage others to attend IU Southeast."

There are many things that this graduating class identified as being good about IU Southeast. When asked what they liked best about their experience here, the top comments were small class size, personal attention, and outstanding , supportive faculty.

However, the more heart-warming comments were about the people that make IU Southeast so special, our faculty and staff. Let me share what some of our students said:

- “The teachers are wonderful. They have changed my life... and supported me through my hardest time. They motivated me and kept me going.”
- “The people here at IU Southeast... want to help you succeed in school as well as after. The faculty are amazing talents, and the students here are among the most friendly and honest people I have met.”

- “In every course I took, the professor was kind, helpful, and approachable. I always received excellent and prompt feedback on any questions. In completing 2 degrees from IU Southeast, I was never frustrated or confused. The help I needed was always available.”
- “The school cares about the students; it shows.”
- “I really enjoyed my time at IU Southeast. There is a real sense of family with all of the students and faculty... which is one thing I really liked. And there were never any problems getting any help that you may need from the administration and faculty.”

- “IU Southeast works with students who have full-time jobs. I felt like the professors understood that being a teacher and taking on graduate courses is a lot to take on at one time. Classes were offered at convenient times.”

And here are some other comments from our students:

- “I like the amount of opportunities available for students to get involved on campus. I also like the new library.”
- “I really appreciated and enjoyed the class sizes at IU Southeast. I liked the opportunities to have discussions with others whose opinions were different than my own.”

- "I love that there are so many opportunities for personal growth, such as joining a student organization."
- "Clean and well-kept campus. Good use of technology. Smaller classes. Lower tuition."
- "The campus is beautiful and convenient."
- "Affordable tuition."
- "I enjoyed the laid-back feeling of attending IU Southeast. While classes are serious, the schedule is extremely flexible. Enjoyed the availability of so many computers on campus."

And finally, this comment was one of my favorites:

- "I love IU Southeast. I don't know where I would have gone without IU Southeast."

We know that the graduates here today have made many sacrifices to be present at this ceremony. It is my pledge to all of these graduates, to our alumni, and to our current students that we will continue to improve the IU Southeast campus. We are committed to exploring opportunities to strengthen IU Southeast and ensure a bright future. In fact, we take particular note of suggested improvements, some of which have come from our student body.

In an exit interview, we asked our graduating seniors what they would change at IU Southeast. A few of our students said they wanted just a little *less* of some things: less late classes, less early classes,

less noise in the computer labs, and not surprisingly,
LESS parking tickets.

I am pleased to point out, however, that the vast majority of our students wanted MORE – more classes, more parking, more electives, more advisors, and more great faculty. Let me assure you that we have been working very hard to bring you MORE – more degrees, more overseas study, more room for our students, and yes, we have recently added MORE parking.

On a personal note, my seven years at IU Southeast have been quite special to me because of the many wonderful people I have met – including members of the class of 2009, some of whom were students in the Honors class I taught last Fall.

Trustee Shoulders, members of the Board of Trustees, and special guests, we are indeed proud of the class of 2009. I am honored and pleased to present them to you today and to congratulate each of them on their significant achievements.

Now to present the response for the class, it is my privilege to introduce Flo Gonya.