Imagine two new students arriving on campus for their first year of college. As the two of them enter the campus walking together from Hanna Avenue toward Smith Mall (the center of our campus), they will pass by the bell tower or carillon. If they happen to look up they will notice a modest white Latin cross at the top of the carillon. Just below the bell-tower two sidewalks “criss-cross” leading to different quadrants of our campus. This pair will pass by the bell-tower many times during the four years that they are enrolled as students. As they “cross paths” on campus, the two of them may develop relationships - with one another as well as with the faculty and staff of the university - that could alter (or confirm) the direction they are traveling on their individual journeys.

The image of the crosswalks beneath the cross atop the carillon tower serves as the emblem of a new set of theological exploration of vocations initiatives funded by a $1.5 million grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc. The eight sets of initiatives (see article inside), known as The Crossings Project, takes very seriously the fact that “crossings” can be highly personal. Over the next three years the Project staff will attempt to engage faculty, staff, and students in creative ways as we design the kind of mentoring environment on campus that will make it even more likely that students at this university have opportunities for reflecting about what it means for each of them to participate in “education for service.”

**A Threshold Point of View**  Michael G. Cartwright, Executive Director

The 2002 edition of the University’s “view book” bears the title “Great Expectations.” On the inside cover this idea is explained in several different ways. “Anticipation of the unknown” is one of the implications of this phrase that this admissions booklet invites students to consider. Prospective students are told, “If you do it right, college will change your life in ways you can’t foresee.” Immediately following that statement this marketing device describes the kind of learning environment that students can expect to find on our campus, where this kind of transformative learning can take place with appropriate support from faculty and staff.

If we are honest with ourselves, the same perspective about anticipating the unknown also applies to most endeavors of this community. *If we do what we do well,* we will discover that our life together as a community of learning will be changed in ways that we can’t foresee. I would like to think that The Crossings Project will be the kind of initiative that will enable this kind of transformative learning for all concerned at the University of Indianapolis. But part of anticipating the unknown is that we must acknowledge at the outset that *we cannot know the outcome* when we are standing on the threshold of the venture.

*What we do know* is that we have assembled a strong group of campus leaders who will serve as the steering committee for this set of eight programmatic initiatives. The Steering Committee for this venture consists of the following thirteen persons:

- Perry Kea (CAS)
- Cheryl Larson (SON)
- Jenny Fogo (OT)
- Kevin Corn (CAS, Chair, EIC)
- Flora Valentine (SON)
- Jim Fuller (CAS, FCA advisor)
- Greg Smith, Residence Life
- Josh Morrison, Residence Life
- Maureen Kinney, First-Year Programs
- Lisa Osterman, Community Programs
- Paul Gabonay, Career Services
- Lang Brownlee, University Chaplain
- Fr. Don Quinn, Catholic campus minister
The Crossings Project Steering Committee will meet the first Thursday of each month this academic year from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m. This group of people will have the task of advising the Project staff about how to identify priorities and, where necessary, to make adjustments over the next three years.

The Steering Committee also held an all-day planning retreat at Benedict Inn Conference and Retreat Center on August 7th. At that time we discussed the five stated outcomes of the project, which when taken together, constitute the measure by which this three-year Lilly Endowment funded project will be judged to be a success or a failure. These five outcomes are:

A. The creation and sustenance of a mentoring environment for students in which all undergraduate students would have access to curricular and co-curricular opportunities for vocational exploration - some explicitly theological and others more “liberal arts” in focus (i.e., discussions about what “giftedness” means or what the preconditions are for human beings to flourish) B from matriculation until the time they receive their degrees. We also plan to create graduate opportunities for theological exploration of vocations.

B. To provide the kinds of enhanced opportunities for professional formation and development for faculty and staff that will not only enable them to play their particular roles effectively in this mentoring environment but will also enhance them as persons who live lives of commitment and service.

C. The creation and sustenance of a series of collaborative relationships and administrative linkages between various curricular and co-curricular programs that will sustain the various conversations that foster the mission of “Education for Service” among the various populations of this campus.

D. To create programmatic linkages with community partners that will create new possibilities for students (and in some instances faculty) to engage in service or to participate in programs that provide the necessary training for future service.

E. As we reach these outcomes, we would demonstrate achievement of the ultimate goal of the project: to provide diverse opportunities that lead students, faculty, and staff to theological exploration of vocations during the grant period and beyond. Demonstration would consist of annual documentation reports of specific projects from the participating programs and units of the university.

What The Crossings Project is about: Eight Programmatic Initiatives:

1) The Pre-Theology Vocational Initiative will build on the existing Christian Vocations Curriculum to expand the range of opportunities for Pre-Theology Majors.

2) The Restructuring Campus Ministry Initiative begins with enhancements of the University’s new Chapel and ultimately result in a new campus ministry team.

3) The Vocational Initiative in Career Services will make it possible for the Career Services staff to contribute even more to the vocation exploration of undergraduate students by creating new resources and activities.
4) The Liberal Arts Vocational Initiative provides a new series of “special options” for vocation exploration and service learning within the context of existing New Student Experience and Spring Term courses.

5) The Co-Curricular Programs Vocation Initiative will build on these curricular opportunities by inviting students and faculty to join in activities and conversations about the meaning of “excellence,” “giftedness,” and “service” (annual themes).

6) The Faculty & Staff Vocation Exploration and Formation Initiative provides opportunities for short-term retreats and renewal opportunities as well as mini-grants for projects that faculty propose for the purposes of enlarging and/or enriching the culture of “education for service” on our campus. Application to be available by September 20, 2002.

7) The Parish Nursing Vocational Initiative creates mentoring opportunities for undergraduate nurses-in-training as well as parish nurses.

8) The Community Partnerships Vocational Initiative builds new ecumenical and interfaith collaborations that will make it possible for the university to create new ways to engage in education for service.

The synergy between these eight initiatives will enable the students, faculty, and staff of the University of Indianapolis to “cross thresholds” for vocation exploration, “cross intersections” for service as well as to “cross into community partnerships.” The cumulative effect of these crossings will enable us to “cross the commons” of this university as we discover the gift of what it means to be an ecumenical and interfaith campus community. In future issues of the Crossings newsletter, we will provide regular “progress reports” about each of these eight initiatives. In the meantime, we hope that faculty and staff will be alert to the various ways that you are invited to participate in this venture.

PROJECT UPDATES

Crossing Thresholds: 42 Students participated in the third annual Threshold Retreat sponsored by the Lantz Center for Christian Vocations . . . Six students from the class of 2006 were awarded the first United Methodist Leader Scholarships for the 2002-2003 academic year: Lindsey Long, Greenwood, IN, Heather Foltz, Dyer, IN, Jamie Evans, Decatur, IN, Alyssa McLean, Plainfield, IN, Allison Pozzeznik, Middlebury, IN, Sarah Ranck, Muncie, IN. Please congratulate these students on this achievement. These $3000 scholarships are renewable for up to four years. Recipients will also be given opportunities for leadership training through Campus Ministries programming.

Crossing into Community Partnerships: We are in the early stages of planning a new Youth Ministry Training Program to be developed collaboratively with Christian Theological Seminary through that institution’s Lilly Endowment-funded Disciples House for Youth project. As soon as an interim director for this program has been hired, plans will proceed for a jointly-sponsored Convocation on Youth Ministry (now scheduled for Feb. 22, 2002). . . . The joint curriculum for youth ministry training will begin Sept. 2003. . . . The Crossings Project is also sponsoring a “pilot project” that will bring a group of 15 Christians, Muslims, and Jews together several times this fall for a triad based on texts from the Torah, the Koran, and the New Testament. A public conversation about the results of this venture has been scheduled for November 14th at 7:00 p.m.
Crossing the Commons:  As Jerry Israel affirmed at the President’s Convocation of Sept. 5, the University Chapel is intended to be “a house of prayer for all people” on this campus. One of the goals of The Crossing Project is to enhance the ecumenical and interfaith character of our campus community. In that sense it is appropriate that on the exterior of the Chapel a “cross and Flames” can be found (the symbol of the United Methodist Church affiliation of the U of I). At the same we are also pleased to have hosted a group of Tibetan monks from the Dropgoang Monastery in the chapel, where they created a mandala Sept. 3-5….The project provides funds for a series of one-time enhancements of the University Chapel in Schwitzer. These enhancements of the worship space will be done during the break between semesters. As enhancements to the chapel are made, courtesy of the Lilly grant, we hope that the Chapel will come to be known as a space to be used for ecumenical Christian gatherings as well as interfaith gatherings of Christians and non-Christians on this campus. Indeed, one of the challenges of The Crossings Project is for all members of this community to join together in “making room” for one another’s religious convictions… With that goal in mind, we will be sponsoring a series of discussion groups during the second half of the semester based on Christine Pohl’s book on the Christian practice of hospitality. More details about the Making Room Book Discussion Groups will be announced shortly

Crossings Calendar

1-10/3  “Theological Exploration of Vocations Conference” (for Lilly grantee institutions) at IUPUI (Michael Cartwright, David Wantz, Jim Fuller, Cheryl Larson, and Jennifer Fogo will comprise the five-person team representing U of I)

10/18-10/20  Annual Lilly Fellows Network Conference at Valparaiso University (Michael Cartwright & Ben Dickerson (Director of CAC) will represent Uof I at this event)

10-26  “Quiet My Soul” A Faith Celebration Concert featuring Monica Brown held at the Christel Dehaan Fine Arts Center’s Ruth Lilly Performance Hall at U of I

2/13/03  Peter Ochs, Bronfman Professor of Judaic Studies at the University of Virginia will give the Showers Lectures on the subject of “Christianity in Jewish Terms” at 2 & 4 p.m.

**********************************

The Crossings Project
Schwitzer Hall  Room 203