Philip Cochran became Associate Dean of IUPUI’s Kelley School of Business in August 2007 after several years teaching at IUPUI and Pennsylvania State University.

Education and Accomplishments

Dean Cochran completed his undergraduate schooling at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) where he double majored in aerospace engineering and management, and earned minors in economics and psychology. He then went on to earn his MBA and PhD from the University of Washington. Dean Cochran also has earned several awards for his professional work and excellence in academics, and he has written articles that have appeared in business publications such as Business Horizons and Organizational Dynamics.

Undergraduate Experience

MIT is an engineering school primarily focused on science and engineering fields, thus Dean Cochran did not have the extensive experience of a liberal arts curriculum offered at many other universities. Although he doesn’t see it as a negative thing, his experience was different from what many students experience on the IUPUI campus.

Although the course load and amount of work was extremely heavy, Dean Cochran is glad that he branched out to areas other than just science and engineering. While focusing on just one area of interest might not be boring to some students, Dean Cochran believes it can often be limiting and that branching out from one’s major areas, Dean Cochran wanted “to see the bigger picture.” He decided that getting a master’s would be a good experience. This led to his interest in business, which later resulted in his getting a PhD in business, which eventually led to a career in business teaching and administration. Even though he has a master’s and a doctorate, Dean Cochran has these comments about his undergraduate influences: “I think the undergraduate career is really crucial. It gives you a lot of perspective on the world. I still tend to use a lot of what I learned as an undergraduate to see the world today…I tend to still think like an engineer…to see the world through pretty much an empirical lens.”

University College

When Dean Cochran attended MIT in the late 60s and early 70s, a major challenge was the lack of support systems for students. MIT is very demanding both academically and structurally, and “it was pretty much all students helping students in terms of academic and intellectual support,” he commented.

Dean Cochran admitted that one of his biggest challenges as an undergraduate was the difficult transition from high school to college. He expressed that while in high school, many students — himself included — could put in limited effort and do fairly well, but college was different. “As an undergraduate [at MIT], you could run at full speed, and you were lucky to be average,” he reminisced about his college career.

“I think there were a lot of people — hopefully I wasn’t one of them — that experienced psychological problems just because of the pressures involved [transitioning to college life]. There just wasn’t that much support. I think there was a Dean of Students, but nothing akin to University College.”

Dean Cochran sees University College as a great first step at IUPUI. Commenting on the relationship University College has with other schools on the IUPUI campus, “I think it’s truly a synergistic relationship. I think [students] get a really good background, good training, on the rest of the campus, so they really are prepared to start their major curriculum once they’ve been through University College. The students are a lot more comfortable at the time they get to [their respective schools].”

Dean Cochran sees University College’s role as being fundamental to the university no matter what school a student ends up attending, ensuring that the majority of students come from a common curriculum background.

UCOL and KSB: A Partnership

Dean Cochran describes University College as the place and experience where students “…learn how to become a college student because it is so different than being a high school student….Many of our students are first generation. They don’t have parents who have had a college experience and, thus, are unable to give them the kinds of insights that are helpful, and so University College does prepare our students for our program,” he observes. Dean Cochran believes that University College definitely has a hand in affecting first- and second-year students at IUPUI preparing for Kelley.

In fact, Kelley School of Business works with University College to promote its program to interested students. Kelley School of Business’ Bridge Program is a big part of transitioning students over from University College. The Bridge Program allows students to meet each other and bond, while also learning about the IUPUI campus and to get a taste of what being a Kelley student is like.

The Future

“We graduate people who go into business, and I think this has a big impact on the state. Over half of the Kelley School graduates who live in the greater Indianapolis area are graduates of Kelley Indianapolis even though we’re a quarter of the size of Kelley Bloomington.” These numbers play a significant role on the current community and future of business in the Indianapolis area.

Describing student outcomes, Dean Cochran commented that students come to IUPUI and get a good foundation from University College, then “they get their degrees from Kelley, and then they go out and work in the community. They live in the community; they’re part of the community. So I think we really are contributing a lot of the future business leaders and entrepreneurs to this community.”

Encouragement for Students

“Critical thinking skills are probably the most important” skills a student can learn, according to Dean Cochran, no matter what major a student has chosen. “I think that we try to do that here in the Kelley School, and I believe that the other colleges on this campus are trying to do the same thing.”

Dean Cochran concluded with these words of encouragement: “The students who come to IUPUI – I think they’re motivated and they’re hard-working, and if they apply themselves, they’re going to succeed.”