Trudy Banta always knew she would attend college at the University of Kentucky. As the daughter of two graduates of the school, it was almost a given. Despite this, with three younger siblings waiting in the wings to head off to college themselves, financing a college education posed a challenge to Banta and her family. However, Banta was determined to attend and was able to procure a scholarship to the university.

During her time at the University of Kentucky, Banta excelled both academically and socially. She began her studies as a physics major, inspired by a high school teacher she respected. However, she soon realized that physics was not the best fit for her. “I was sitting in the lab all the time working, and one day I thought, ‘Where is everyone? Where are all the students?’” It was this desire to work more closely with others that led her to switch to the College of Arts and Sciences and eventually receive a degree in biology/education. However, Banta would not lose her interest in methodology and research, and her skills in these areas would eventually play an important role in her position at IUPUI.

BANTA was also heavily involved in extracurricular activities at the University of Kentucky, an issue she feels strongly about as the Senior Advisor to the Chancellor for Academic Planning and Evaluation. Banta believes that students “gain valuable networking skills and connect with the larger community” through extracurricular activities and this can play an important part in students’ future success.

One way the Indianapolis community plays a special role in the success of IUPUI and its students is through the many internships it makes available. “IUPUI, because of its location, has special programs such as the internship program at the state house, which other universities do not.” Banta believes that commuter and non-traditional students at IUPUI can help the campus community broaden its views on campus engagement and student involvement outside the classroom.

Not only does Banta believe it is important for connections to be made outside the university, she also believes it is essential that members of the university community connect with one another. To this end, many of Banta’s staff members are on various campus committees to ensure that the evaluation information they gather is being shared and used. Banta’s department also contributes to community organizations such as the alternative schools offered in Simon Malls by the Simon Youth Foundation. “Our research is only important if we share it with others. We must take what we have learned and share it with those that can use the information and benefit from it.”

Extracurricular activities, internships and special programs available within the community, connections within the campus community and with organizations in the community – these are all types of connections that Banta believes are key to the success of IUPUI and its students.