Dr. Kody Varahramyan completed the majority of his undergraduate education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Like many students, he found certain parts of the transition to university from high school challenging.

“When you are in high school things are more structured than when you go to university. You decide which classes you take and there are parts of the day when you have no classes. That was an interesting experience for me, and there were some challenges,” Varahramyan said. He went on to explain that unlike today, there were not as many resources for undergraduates and new students. “In those days, or at least at the places I went, there were not too many university centers that would give you assistance. I know in more recent times, there are [many] offices and services offered for undergraduate students, so in a way, I am envious.”

While Varahramyan always knew he wanted to study electrical engineering, it wasn’t until later in his studies that he discovered his true passion. “I was in my junior year when I took my first course in the area of semiconductor devices, and I fell in love with it. It just clicked. I knew that was it,” he explained.

Even before then, however, Varahramyan knew that he wanted to work in an academic setting, but initially chose to work at IBM in order to gain the practical experience he believed would be necessary to be a good professor and to better serve students.

His transition back to the university after nearly ten years in the industry posed its own set of challenges. Not only was Varahramyan preparing for and teaching classes, but he was also establishing his own place in the research community. He shared that although the first year was challenging, it was also very successful.

Varahramyan’s success continues today as the Vice Chancellor for Research at IUPUI. Like many departments in the university, Varahramyan’s office plays a key role both in the university and in the community. His main focus is “developing the research enterprise” which includes developing new knowledge at the university level as well as transitional knowledge that can have an impact on the community.

Varahramyan went on to further explain what he believes the university’s role is in the larger outside community. “The university or campus is not sitting here just for itself. We are really here to serve the needs of the community; the educational needs of the community. The community, especially Indianapolis and the region around it, need a campus like this to serve its needs.”

He explained that from the beginning, IUPUI has been a leader in serving the community. As time passes, he said, more and more people from throughout the state are being educated at IUPUI. “Conservatively, over half of the lawyers in the state, the nurses in the state, and the doctors in the state have been trained here [as well as] many of the people who are in science and engineering, many of the teachers and those that are… in social work – it just goes on and on. The impact of this campus on the community is just mind-boggling.”

Varahramyan went on to discuss the skills that students who come to IUPUI for education and training need in order to be successful in college and in life. “Ultimately, to be successful in life, to a great degree, relies on the quality of the academic programs they are enrolled in and on how they are guided by their faculty advisors and mentors.” He went on to share what he believes is one of the keys to success in life: “If students can learn how to learn on their own, that is a key secret to success in life because over time, no matter what you study, things change. There is new knowledge; if we don’t keep up with it on our own, learn things, and know how to learn things, then we won’t progress.” For Varahramyan learning how to learn and continuing as a lifelong learner is a key indicator of the success of an undergraduate education.

University College is one place where incoming students begin to learn important skills and access many of the resources they need to become successful students. Varahramyan believes that “[University College] plays a very helpful and useful role….When they come in as freshmen, many [students] really appreciate having some good guidance and some offices or places where they can go and seek help and good advice.”