

Interview with Alan Rankin
Interviewer: Unknown
1972

Rankin: Some of my observations and background about our campus in Evansville will be a little hazy because the idea of a regional campus in Evansville began shortly before I arrived at Indiana State University. Our Board of Trustees in April of 1965 approved in principle the idea of establishing the campus in Evansville, and I came on the scene a few months later on July 1, 1965. By that time Dr. Norbert Stirzaker, who was the first administrative head of the activities connected with getting the campus established, and he was located on this campus, was starting the effort or had begun the effort to find facilities and get some staff hired so that the campus could open in September 1965. This was one of the very difficult problems confronting this administration at that time, because there was such a short time to get ready for opening school in September. But school did open, as everyone knows, with some 421 students, I believe, in that first class and a small faculty. The background of the establishment of the campus seems to go something like this: There was this interest on the part of the Evansville people, particularly the legislators in Evansville or the then legislators, and they had passed a resolution, I believe, asking Indiana University or Purdue University to establish a campus. I think because of some understanding with the University of Evansville, that Indiana University had, what shall I say, felt that it would be misunderstood if they were to go into the Evansville area and compete in a sense with the University of Evansville. I don't know what Purdue's feelings were about the matter. Because of this reluctance of Indiana and Purdue to proceed, they turned next to Indiana State University to see if we would undertake this assignment, and our Board was interested in this and Dr. Stirzaker was active in developing that interest both in Evansville and in Terre Haute. And the result was this resolution of our Board of Trustees in April of 1965 that we would undertake this. Subsequently, legislators in the Evansville area indicated that they would support our efforts, and we obtained the permission of Governor Branigan to proceed, or at least he was aware of this and did not tell us not to, and then later after school began, there was a resolution of the Legislature. I don't know if the legislature was actually in session but there was a system, a mechanism for legislators getting resolutions adopted, and I don't know just how that works, including Indiana State and Ball State in this approval of the idea of a four-year campus in Evansville. It added Ball State and Indiana State to the names of Purdue and Indiana University. And we were underway, and it was pretty clear that Indiana State University was to carry on with this assignment. Three of the universities held a meeting in Evansville, perhaps in August of 1965. Indiana's president and Purdue's president, then President Starr and President Hovde and I went to Evansville and there was a meeting at Mr. Mead Johnson's residence to review this matter. And Indiana University and Purdue at that time did express an interest, but we were already pretty deeply involved, and the leadership of the community seemed to recognize that, and it turned out, that it was clear that we were to go ahead and set up the new campus. He had to find a place for the classes to meet and for the administrative officers to have their offices and we used the old Centennial School over near the Mead Johnson plant. They leased it to us for a limited period of time, which proved of course, to be a spur to more permanent quarters. The old building was usable although it wasn't a very, it couldn't have been a permanent setting for the campus, because it was a hundred years old. Or maybe it was just called the Centennial School, but it was a very, very old building, and not modern in many ways, and served only a temporary purpose for us. But a very good purpose, and we were very glad to get it. One of the first problems was to find a permanent site, and I remember touring the possibilities with different committees and Mayor McDonald, both on the east side of Evansville and on the West Side and in the Southwest part, and the present site was my choice. Mayor McDonald was most cooperative

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and agreed that could become the site and then through the cooperation and generosity of the people of Evansville as expressed through the Southern Indiana Higher Education Incorporated, that site was obtained and given to Indiana State University for this campus. These were, all of these things took a great deal of work on the part of many people, and lots of people deserve credit for this development. I think we were involved because the other two universities, namely Indiana and Purdue had not, were not ready to move into the Evansville area with one of their regional campuses. And so, we have had the opportunity to develop the campus in Evansville and it has been a very interesting and extremely worthwhile effort. There was a great deal of interest and cooperation on the part of the people of Evansville. There was much enthusiasm for this as evidenced by acquiring these 300 acres for our campus, and there was a lot of personal and individual enthusiasm and cooperation expressed and given. So that part was most helpful. A difficult thing is to do something like this in a sound fashion. You can hurry too much, in trying to build an educational program, and I think sometimes there was some misunderstanding based on the feeling that Indiana State wasn't moving fast enough. Hell, you had to have some permanent facilities, and it takes things like a site and permanent buildings. And before you build buildings you have to have some money to build them with and you have to develop a faculty. And this takes time to get a well-qualified faculty. You certainly have to build a library; you couldn't claim to be a college without having an adequate library. And that has been built very rapidly, I think, over a period of now of 6 or 7 years. So, I think we moved really as fast as it was possible to move. The original support came from Indiana State, Terre Haute, plus tuition fees. There was no legislative appropriation to Evansville in the very early days of this campus. And there was a limit on what Terre Haute could put into it. But it put dollars into Evansville that had been appropriated to the Terre Haute campus, and you just couldn't run two campuses on one appropriation very well until we got separate recognition by separate appropriation for the Evansville campus. I have been very pleased with the progress of the campus, particularly under President Rice's leadership. It has grown rapidly and grown soundly; and I think that is all we could ask for at the present time.

Q: Is the ISUE campus the newest regional campus in the state?

A: It is a little hard to know quite how to answer that because I don't know the exact status of the campus at Richmond. There has been a program at Richmond that has been developed by Indiana and Purdue and Ball State cooperatively with Earlham College and I don't know whether that has been called a regional college or not, but it is an educational program there that the state has operated in this private setting. Now I think land has been acquired, and money provided by the citizens of Richmond to develop a regional campus there too, but just when that program began in relation to ours in Evansville, I am not sure. I expect that it would be correct to say that the Richmond one is in general terms newer than the Evansville campus.