



NEWS RELEASE

Kathy Funke, Director
News & Information Services
812/465-7005
FAX 812/465-1096
E-mail kfunke@usi.edu
www.usi.edu/events.htm

For Immediate Release

March 12, 2001

USI Board of Trustees approves record number of candidates for degrees

The University of Southern Indiana Board of Trustees at the March 12 meeting approved degree candidates for the 2001 Commencement, including the bestowal of honorary doctoral degrees upon James S. Vinson, president of the University of Evansville, and Helen Thomas, an American journalist who is known for her coverage of U.S. presidents.

Ms. Thomas will be the speaker for the Commencement ceremony at 3 p.m. on Sunday, May 6 at Roberts Stadium when 1,390 graduates, a record number, will be eligible to receive degrees. Her nephew Patrick Mabarak is a sophomore at USI.

Dr. Vinson is retiring as UE president this summer after 14 years of service that saw the institution established with a distinct identity on firm, fiscally sound footing. He engaged the faculty and staff in sharpening the University's mission and then used it as a springboard for the overhaul of the curriculum, departmental re-organization, and expansion of student recruitment and retention. During his tenure, the UE campus has seen renovation and new construction including the renovation and additions to the Koch Center for Engineering and Science in 2000.

Dr. Vinson is being recognized for his leadership in supporting the partnership between private and public higher education institutions in southwestern Indiana.

He is a native of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, and received his undergraduate degree from Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania. He holds master's and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Virginia.

Raised in Detroit, Helen Thomas wanted a career in journalism from her earliest years as a high school newspaper reporter. From her copy-aide job at the *Washington Daily News* she moved to a 12-year career as a radio news writer for United Press International (UPI), covering various federal agencies. She was assigned to the White House press corps in 1961 and has covered every administration since President Kennedy's. She helped break down barriers against women in the national media, became the first female president of the White House Correspondents Association, the first female officer of the National Press Club, and the first woman member, later president, of the Gridiron Club. She held a 57-year career with UPI, resigning in 2000. She covered eight presidential administrations and won countless journalism awards. As the senior wire-service correspondent at the White House, Thomas was known to television viewers as the reporter whose dignified "Thank You, Mr. President" signaled the end of White House press conferences. She has written two books, *Dateline: White House* in 1975 and *Front Row at the White House* in 1999.

USI President H. Ray Hoops told board members that USI has shifted the Commencement ceremony to a Sunday date. Nine graduates in the Class of 2001 will graduate summa cum laude. This is the first class to include students from the Honors Program, a program that promotes academic excellence and extracurricular development that was established in the 1997-1998 academic year.

