

**RICES, WRIGHT FACING  
FINAL COMMENCEMENT**



**NEWS  
RELEASE**

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Some 950 students will be eligible to receive degrees on Saturday, May 7, when the 1994 University of Southern Indiana Commencement is held at Roberts Stadium in Evansville. It will be the final Commencement for USI President David L. Rice, first lady Betty Fordice Rice, and Byron C. Wright, USI senior vice president and long-time University liaison to the Indiana General Assembly.

The trio will retire on June 30. They came to USI in 1967 to initiate 27 years of leadership that turned the Indiana State University branch campus, started in 1965, into the state's fifth baccalaureate-granting institution, created in 1985. USI has been the fastest growing university in the state and now has more than 7,500 students.

Rice brought his young family to the Evansville campus just two years after it was founded. The first administrative head of the campus, he developed the curriculum from limited two-year associate degree offerings into a comprehensive curriculum of more than 60 undergraduate majors and six master's level programs.

When Dr. Rice joined the University, classes were held in an unused and decrepit Evansville elementary school. He worked with community leaders and ISU officials to create a master-planned campus west of Evansville. The first buildings opened in 1969 and today the 300-acre campus has several major buildings valued at nearly \$55 million. A new \$14.8 million Health Professions Building will open next spring.

When the campus was founded, it was always intended that someday it would operate as a separate state university. In 1985, legislation was enacted which created the University of Southern Indiana with a separate board of trustees. President Rice's careful leadership to develop a strong curriculum and assemble a competent teaching faculty was cited during studies to determine the University's readiness to operate apart from ISU.

Beyond building a University, both David and Betty Rice have been instrumental in building community inside and outside the University. Mrs. Rice has been actively involved in many community and state groups, including the Girl Scouts, YWCA, United Way, American Association of University Women, Westwood Garden Club, Evansville Home Economists, Extension Homemakers, Posey County Community Foundation, Operation City Beautiful, Evansville Philharmonic Orchestra, Delta Kappa Gamma, and PEO educational organization. She also has owned her own business, Peckenpaugh's Garden Center, while handling the myriad duties of USI's first lady.

Dr. Rice has been active in the Evansville Housing Authority, Leadership Evansville, United Way, WNIN Public Broadcasting and Indiana Public Broadcasting, Greater Evansville Chamber of Commerce, The Villages, Youth as Resources, Governor's Title XX Citizens Advisory Committee,

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Evansville Museum of Arts and Science, Buffalo Trace Council Boy Scouts, Rotary, Evansville Coalition on Adult Literacy, Evansville Museum of Arts and Sciences, Indiana Conference for Higher Education, and Southern Indiana Rural Development Project.

Rice is a native of New Market, Indiana, and received his B.A., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees from Purdue University. Mrs. Rice is a native of Russellville, Indiana, where her centenarian father, Rudolph Fordice, still lives. She also is a Purdue graduate with a B.S. and M.S. in family economics. She taught in Wallace, Indiana, and in Muncie before the Rices moved to Evansville. They were married in September 1950 and have a daughter, Patricia Denise Dawson, a department store executive in York, Pennsylvania, and Michael Alan, an Indianapolis dentist. The Rices plan to live in retirement in nearby New Harmony, Indiana, where they have used historic structures from Montgomery County and Russellville to create a home that fits into the historic community.

Wright became senior vice president of USI in January 1993, when he assumed the duty of coordinating the search for a new USI president to succeed Dr. Rice. It turned out to be another Purdue graduate and Illinois native, Dr. H. Ray Hoops, who assumes duties July 1.

Wright came to USI with Rice from Ball State University and served as the first business manager for the then branch campus of ISU. He was promoted in 1971 to vice president for Business Affairs and in 1985, treasurer of the University was added to his title. He also serves as assistant treasurer and board member for the USI Foundation.

Wright has been involved with numerous programs in official and ex officio capacities, including University management at Historic New Harmony. He has been active with the Metropolitan Evansville Chamber of Commerce, and is called upon frequently to serve on task forces and study groups on community issues such as taxation and labor relations. He also has served with the Vanderburgh County Building Authority, United Way, Westside Nut Club, and in numerous capacities with the YMCA.

Wright is a native of Matthews, Indiana, where his mother, Pauline, who will be 90 in August, still lives. He is a graduate of Jefferson Township High School and earned his B.S. and M.A. degrees from Ball State University, where he was finance officer prior to coming to USI. He taught business education at Muncie Central High School before entering university administration. Wright was honored with the USI Alumni Association's 1991 Special Recognition Award as one of those people who have "made USI a full-service institution attentive to the needs of the people of this region and an integral part of higher education in Indiana." He has a son, Marvin, a CPA in Evansville, and a daughter, Leeanna Parson, a teacher in Columbus, Ohio. His wife Joanne is director of student services at Ivy Tech-Southwest in Evansville.

Gordon St. Angelo, program director of the Lilly Endowment, Indianapolis, will bring the Commencement address May 7 and will receive an honorary doctoral degree along with Byron Wright; Margaret Henderson (Meg) Blair, co-founder and president of Research Systems Corporation of Evansville, and Jennings D. "Nick" and Josephine K. "Jo" Carter of Evansville and Vero Beach, Florida, who have created a \$1-million charitable remainder trust at USI.