

## **I-69 project earns USI an Excellence in Research and Analysis honor**



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In its first year competing, the University of Southern Indiana won the University Economic Development Association (UEDA) Award of Excellence in Research and Analysis for its work on the I-69 Innovation Corridor initiative.

Daniela Vidal, director of Opportunity Development and Michael Thissen, manager of the Innovation Corridor, accepted the national award, on behalf of USI Outreach and Engagement and Indiana University's Indiana Business Research Center (IBRC), at the UEDA annual summit in Anchorage, Alaska, on September 29, 2015.

“Winning UEDA’s Award of Excellence in Research and Analysis is a tremendous honor and recognition of the important work being done by USI and our partners,” said Dr. Mark Bernhard, associate provost for Outreach and Engagement. “I’m proud of Michael Thissen, Daniela Vidal and all of our collaborators working to advance innovation along the I-69 Innovation Corridor.”

In August, USI was identified as a UEDA Award of Excellence finalist in the Research and Analysis category. Finalists presented their projects this week in Alaska and summit attendees voted for the best initiative in each category. Awards of Excellence winners were crowned based on impact, originality, replicability/scalability and sustainability.

“The Indiana Business Research Center at Indiana University is thrilled to contribute to the USI Innovation Corridor project,” said Timothy Slaper, research director of IBRC. “The project applies the IBRC’s Innovation Index to help access southwest Indiana’s innovation capacity, strengths and challenges, as well as report economic performance.”

Led by USI, the Innovation Index centered on 11 counties in southwest Indiana, with a focus on facilitating regional transformation. Now in its fourth year, the project has documented useful insights of over 23 counties about the role of innovation measurement and has begun to see sustainable growth when the index is applied to the ecosystem.

“Achieving this high honor validates our regional approach to true capacity building through innovation, entrepreneurship and talent development,” said Thissen. “I am excited as southwest Indiana and northwest Kentucky move forward, to continue to build a region prepared for the future.”

USI also was identified as a Awards of Excellence finalist in the Innovation and Entrepreneurship category and Talent Development category. Bernhard and Dr. Jason Salstrom, manager of Technology Commercialization, competed with the Technology Commercialization Academy in the Innovation and Entrepreneurship category. Dr. Scott Gordon, dean of USI Pott College of Science, Engineering, and Education and Allison Grabert, director of Southwest Indiana STEM (SwI STEM) Resource Center, presented the SwI STEM Resource Center Initiative in a competition for Talent Development. USI competed against institutions such as the University of Kansas, Penn State University, the University of New Mexico and Iowa State University.

In addition to the competition, USI participated in the annual summit and presented a general panel discussion to peers in the economic development industry on building a network for distributed and sustainable regional development.

For more information on the I-69 Innovation Corridor and other USI Outreach and Engagement initiatives, visit [USI.edu/outreach/cared/economic-development](https://usi.edu/outreach/cared/economic-development).