

GARY PIKE

“What a long, strange trip it’s been.” That is a well-known Grateful Dead lyric that Gary Pike might choose to describe his career journey from political speechwriter to higher education researcher, full-time university administrator, teacher, and research advisor to scores of doctoral students. More recently, he might refer to another classic Dead lyric, “Every silver lining’s got a touch of grey,” referring to the long, pony-tailed, more-gray-than-black hair and full beard that he now proudly sports. While he travels more these years to deliver talks about his research, and less so to follow the Dead and other jam bands, his playful passion for clear, creative, and thoughtful analysis of the college student experience has earned him the respect of colleagues, an array of leadership roles and awards, and a significant number of protégés who will extend his legacy in the field.

Gary Pike’s tenure at Indiana University began in 2006, when he accepted the positions of executive director of information management and institutional research at IUPUI and associate professor of higher education in the Bloomington-based Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA) program. Prior to joining the IU faculty, he served as the director of institutional research at Mississippi State University from 2003 to 2006 and for 10 years before that, director of student life studies at the University of Missouri in Columbia. He began his higher education research career at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) Center for Assessment Research and Development, where he first worked with Dr. Trudy Banta, who would eventually bring him to Indiana University.

Gary’s work at UTK helped establish that university as a pioneer in the assessment of college student outcomes and institutional effectiveness. This status brought an award for UTK from the National Council on Measurement in Education and recognition by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development at a conference for European university leaders in Paris. Gary also participated in research in the 1980s that raised uncomfortable questions for the major testing companies about the concept of value added, which many state



legislators were beginning to consider as a potential measure of college quality for use in performance-funding schemes.

Gary has often been introduced to national audiences as someone with a gift for understanding statistics and for explaining complex concepts with remarkable clarity. He has developed a long-standing reputation as one of the most productive scholars in higher education research. This reputation is based on over 100 articles published in peer-reviewed journals, one-third of which appear in the discipline’s highest-impact-factor journal, *Research in Higher Education*. He won the Association for Institutional Research annual Charles F. Elton Best Paper Award a record seven times. Gary also received the association’s most prestigious research award, the Sidney Suslow Award, for his lifetime contributions to higher education research and scholarship. And that was in 2010! His research has delved into many aspects of higher education student and institutional success including the impact of residential learning communities, the importance of high school on freshman success, adult learners, and the connection of *U.S. News and World Report* rankings to measures of learning quality. He has delivered over 100 presentations and workshops across the United States and Canada.

When he joined the IU faculty in 2006, there was no question about Gary entering as a tenured associate professor,

given his productive publication record and the number of awards he had received for his work. In addition to his awards from the Association for Institutional Research, he also received the Outstanding Assessment Research Award from the American College Personnel Association in 1998 and was named a senior scholar by that organization in 2000.

Gary has rendered significant service to the field of higher education. In 2015 he served as president of the Association for Institutional Research, and for three years he was a member of that organization’s board of directors. He is currently finishing a five-year stint as editor of one of the premier higher education research journals, *The Review of Higher Education*.

Gary Pike is among the most generous scholars in the field, sharing his talent with students and colleagues to help advance the field of higher education research. He had collaborated with a number of IU higher education scholars before coming to IU, including Trudy Banta and George Kuh, noting on his arrival, “When I came here it was a real sense of coming to someplace. It really was an opportunity to work with people I knew, I liked, and I respected, and that’s an awfully nice way to finish up your career.”

While at IU, Gary has involved students in his research and writing; they have also been his co-authors of articles and co-presenters at professional conferences. His colleagues and scores of doctoral students in the higher education program are very happy that he spent 14 very productive years at Indiana University. His care for and devotion to the development of young scholars have become his most recent hallmark. Students know that if they really want to learn how to apply statistical methods to higher education research, they cannot find a better teacher, advisor, and mentor in the field than Gary Pike. “Nothing left to do but smile, smile, smile.”

*Victor Borden
Trudy Banta*