



John A. Cummins
Professor, 1905-1941



John T. Roberts
President, 1905-1908



Alva Button Roberts
House Mother, 1905-1908



Samuel Wertz
Trustee, 1902, 1906-1909

Roberts Circle Recognition for Mission Stewardship



Irby J. Good '08
Student, 1905-1908
President, 1915-1944



William Karstedt
Trustee, 1902-1906



Ezekiel B. Kephart
Bishop, 1881-1906



Flossie Marchand Beghtel '11
Student, 1906-1911

Introducing the Roberts Circle

The eight individuals who comprise the mission stewardship circle for which this recognition is named were people of varied interests and great versatility. Between the start of 1902 and the end of 1911, they worked in collaboration with one another to establish Indiana Central University (ICU). John T. Roberts would become Indiana Central's first president. The eight individuals collectively have come to be known as the Roberts Circle.

We look back on those early years and see the ways these pioneering leaders made Indiana Central possible, and we are encouraged in our own individual and collective efforts to engage the challenges of the present time and place.

Founding Parents & Partners in Ministry

John T. Roberts looked back on his first year as president of Indiana Central University (1905-06) and quipped, “If we had known how difficult it would be to found a college, we would not have had the courage to try.” But he and the Roberts Circle persisted, and over time they began to succeed.

One of President Roberts’ many partners in beginning Indiana Central was also his partner in marriage and in ministry — his wife, **Rev. Alva Button Roberts**. They had a shared love of learning and a passion for Christian service. They were both fine preachers and resourceful leaders.

John T. Roberts (1858-1937) was president of Indiana Central University from 1905 to 1908. He was a United Brethren in Christ (UBC) clergyman and Hoosier. During the time he was a student at Hartsville College (1881-1887), he experienced the effects of the schism over secret societies in the church. Following the split between advocates of the Old Constitution and the New Constitution, Roberts quickly rose to become one of the most admired leaders in the White River Conference of the UBC Church. In 1902, he led a successful effort to get the three annual conferences in Indiana to support the proposition to found a church college, then spearheaded the effort to move forward with the project.



Roberts never pretended to be more than he was. He had no academic aspirations for himself, but he understood well the need for academic integrity. His decision to resign as president of Indiana Central in 1908 was prompted by the fraud of the person appointed to serve as the first academic dean. Rather than let the conflict spill into the open, Roberts left in a way that made it possible for the college to survive, trusting that the Board of Trustees would ultimately clean up the mess.

Roberts continued to serve as a United Brethren in Christ pastor until his death in 1937.

Rev. Alva Louise Button Roberts (1865-1950) was known as “Mother Roberts” by those who knew of the many ways she served the United Brethren in Christ Church during her long life. She came to know her husband through correspondence about her ministry as “the first lady circuit rider” in the Lower Wabash Conference of the UBC Church. Their marriage in 1894 produced another first – a “clergy couple” – for the Church.

Rev. Alva Roberts was multi-talented. As a teen, she learned to set type in a print shop. When she discovered that the church with which she was originally affiliated, the Methodist Church, did not ordain women, she left and joined the United Brethren in Christ, a church where that was permitted.

From 1905 to 1908, she and her young family lived in the College building at Indiana Central. Furnishings were sparse, and funds were always in short supply. Rev. Alva Roberts prepared food for virtually all the students, washed clothes, sang in the college choir, took courses in the fledgling School of Commerce, and helped her husband do things like edit *The Indiana News* publication for the UBC constituency. She was an unpaid volunteer who threw herself into the mission of the college.

After her children were grown, in the 1920s, she returned to active service as a United Brethren clergywoman. When she died in 1950, the Evangelical United Brethren Church remembered her as “Mother Roberts” – a beloved pioneer in ministry. Today, we remember her as a founding parent, who with her husband served the “little larger parish” of Indiana Central University.



Builders & Trustees

When the United Brethren leaders began planning Indiana Central University, they turned to their most experienced clergy and laity. **Rev. William Karstedt** was a multi-talented man – a stonemason, building contractor, and preacher – who had built churches in Ontario, Canada, before immigrating to the United States in the 1890s. **Professor Samuel Wertz** was the longtime principal of Columbus (Indiana) High School. He also was the volunteer secretary of the White River Conference of the UBC Church for 30 years.

These men served on the committee that reviewed the 1902 proposal submitted by real estate developer William Elder to the UBC Church, the proposal that would establish the land for the university. They revised the proposal and supervised implementation. They each served two terms on the Indiana Central Board of Trustees.



William J. Karstedt (1862-1937) joined J.T. Roberts to champion the effort to found Indiana Central University. Karstedt had recently completed construction of First United Brethren in Christ Church in Indianapolis, and Roberts had served as Conference Superintendent.

Karstedt and Roberts presented real estate developer William Elder's business proposal to leaders of the three conferences of the UBC Church in Indiana. Once the agreement was reached, establishing land for Indiana Central University, Karstedt oversaw the construction of the Administration Building from 1903 to 1905. He and J.T. Roberts sold lots in the University Heights neighborhood to fulfill the UBC Church's obligations as defined by the agreement with Elder.

Karstedt was never associated with the administration of the college, but his business endeavors in University Heights proved to be crucial. He built the first home in the neighborhood (1219 Hanna Avenue). Later, Karstedt and his family operated the general store located at the corner of Hanna and Shelby at Interurban Railroad Stop 4. Indiana Central students called him "Pop," and faculty knew they could charge food at Karstedt's store until they got paid. Karstedt was proud to be known as one of the co-founders of Indiana Central University.

Samuel Wertz (1854-1926) had taught mathematics at Hartsville College in the 1880s, when J.T. Roberts was a student there. Professor Wertz had more practical experience as a teacher, and college and school administrator than anyone else in the Roberts Circle. He appealed to prospective donors and church leaders to provide financial support for the fledgling college in University Heights. At times, in those first few years, Wertz would collect money from UBC laypeople in Columbus, Ind., then take the Greenwood/Columbus/Louisville Interurban car to University Heights, where he would give the money to President Roberts to pay for coal to heat the College building. It is not too much to say that Samuel Wertz kept the college going when it was in danger of closing.

When President Roberts resigned in 1908, Wertz shepherded Indiana Central through the next year. Then he recruited Lewis Bonebrake, a UBC layperson from Ohio, to serve as the next president. In Columbus, Professor Wertz was revered for his dedicated service to the community, the church, and to education at all levels. In 1925, shortly before his death, the United Brethren congregation named their building Wertz Memorial Evangelical United Brethren Church.



Mentors & Models

Colleges and universities are created with models of other institutions in view. And that was certainly true of Indiana Central. **Bishop Ezekiel B. Kephart** and **Professor John A. Cummins** were both proud graduates of Otterbein University. These pioneering leaders, both first-generation students, had been closely involved with efforts to found other institutions of higher education for the United Brethren Church. They were the best individuals available to work with J.T. Roberts to launch the college.



Bishop Ezekiel Boring Kephart (1834-1906) was known as the most passionate advocate of higher education in the UBC Church. He completed his bachelor's degree at Otterbein University in 1865. He was a visionary leader who guided the church through the crisis over the revision of the Confession of Faith and change in the U.S. Constitution (1885-1889).

After a quarter-century of serving as a bishop of the UBC Church (1881-1905), Kephart volunteered to lead the effort to raise funds to support the fledgling Indiana Central University. He had founded Western College in Iowa, one of many institutions that struggled with finances. Kephart resolved that Indiana Central would not succumb to the same problems. He and J.T. Roberts had seen Hartsville College torn apart by sectarian division. They were determined to forge ahead, supported by the 50,000 members of the UBC Church in the state of Indiana, a constituency that they believed should be able to supply at least 500 students for the new church college.

The initial issue of *The Indiana News* announced the \$25,000 campaign that Bishop Kephart was set to lead. He arrived in early January 1906. Nine days later he died while meeting with William Elder and J.T. Roberts. The fundraising effort he had planned to lead turned out to be an effort that others led, lifting up his life as an example of “downright devotion to the cause.”

John A. Cummins (1865-1941) had an uncommon breadth of interests, including his primary aspiration as a philosopher. After graduating from Otterbein University, he taught high school and later served as a superintendent of schools in Ohio. As a doctoral student at the University of Chicago, he engaged in projects with notable philosopher and educator John Dewey.

Between the tenures of J.T. Roberts and Lewis Bonebrake, Professor Cummins served as acting president of Indiana Central. He had no ambition for the position, but he would shoulder it as long as necessary. Due to the extraordinary needs of the fledgling college, he was never able to complete his doctorate.

Professor Cummins mentored Irby J. Good, one of the first students to graduate, and steered Good to become business manager — and later president — of the college. Professor Cummins also served the public good, including writing the standards for high school teacher training for the state of Indiana and helping to manage the developing infrastructure of the University Heights community.

At the time of his death in 1941, he was the longest-serving professor on the faculty (35 years). Marvin Henricks (Class of 1939), who took courses from Cummins shortly before the beginning of World War II, described him as “the intellectual lode star” of the campus. At his death, Professor Cummins’ first student — Irby J. Good — delivered his eulogy, bearing witness to the ways that he had made it possible for Indiana Central University (commonly referred to at that time as Indiana Central College) to survive.



First Students & Sustaining Alumni

We don't always think of students as founders of colleges, but most universities are not created the way Indiana Central was. **Irby J. Good** (Class of 1908) and **Flossie Marchand Beghtel** (1911) proudly claimed to be ICU's first students, and in many significant ways, they were preeminent. This intrepid pair shared a calling with the faculty and church leaders who embodied "downright devotion to the cause." As president and alumna volunteer, respectively, they served their alma mater for the rest of their lives. Thanks to their determined efforts, Indiana Central survived for more than four decades until a new generation could accept leadership responsibility (after World War II) to shape a future that has proven to be sustainable.



Irby J. Good (1885-1945), as a 17-year-old student, was present the day J.T. Roberts and William Karstedt presented the proposal to create Indiana Central University before the St. Joseph Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. Two years later, while living at home in Marion, Good was recruited to attend Indiana Central by Bishop Ezekiel B. Kephart. In 1904, Kephart commissioned Good to first go to Otterbein University for a year, so that he could help President Roberts open the new college in University Heights.

In his second year, Good was called upon to teach preparatory students in the Academy at Indiana Central. Irby was the first student to do many things at this institution: He founded the first literary society and formed the life-workers vocation exploration group. He was the first student to have the job of shoveling coal for the furnace that heated the College building. Later, he taught German in the Academy and courses in business administration in the University while serving as the University's business manager. When President Bonebrake was not able to continue due to poor health, Good accepted the burden of being president, a role in which he served for 29 years. Good went on to be an eyewitness and participant-observer of much of ICU's history, until June 1944, when he concluded his tenure as president.

Flossie Marchand Beghtel (1886-1981) was living in Whitley County, Indiana, when Indiana Central opened. President Roberts was confident she and other "daughters" of the United Brethren Church in Indiana would be sent by their parents to a college of the church, where faculty would offer trustworthy guidance. Flossie dropped out of high school in 1902 due to family illness, but following her mother's death in 1904, she re-enrolled and graduated from Larmill High School in the spring of 1906. She enrolled at ICU that fall. She spent a year at the Academy before she began "the college course of study." As Flossie liked to point out to other alumni, she was "one of the first students to attend all four years" at Indiana Central University.

From the beginning, she was a leader. One of the founding members of the Philomathean Literary Society and an active participant in the YWCA, she graduated in 1911. Only a few years later, she helped create the University's alumni association. For many years, she led efforts to collect "the history of the alumni."

Flossie and her husband, Floyd Beghtel, operated Rosedale Hills Guernsey Dairy Farm, a space of rolling hills near the university, now occupied by the Rosedale Hills neighborhood. Flossie was especially proud to receive an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters in 1961, 50 years after she graduated.



Looking Back

We look back on the first decade (1902-1911) of our institution's history with respectful awe for the versatility and persistence displayed by these pioneering leaders who made Indiana Central — renamed University of Indianapolis in 1986 — possible. Their dedicated efforts, deliberate follow-through, and determination to work together amid unforeseen obstacles are clearly visible. They refused to be defeated.

J.T. Roberts and his colleagues dared to imagine a time “when hundreds and thousands of students would stream forth” from the campus year by year. They did not see the fruits of their labor during the season when they were stewards of the mission of Indiana Central University. But neither did they lose hope! That may have had something to do with the fact that there were student initiatives that carried forward into the future. Indeed, one of the most salient achievements of the Roberts Circle was the persistent efforts of young alumni who shouldered the burdens of leadership in the years after the Roberts administration came to an end.

We look back at the missional collaborations that comprised the Roberts Circle, and we find inspiration for the work we do. We anticipate the possibility that someday others will take up our tasks to carry forward the mission of the University of Indianapolis.



2022 Roberts Circle Award

Faculty Academy and IT Academic Computing Team

The Roberts Circle Award for Mission Stewardship recognizes the work of a group of UIndy employees who have made a sustained contribution over a specific period of time. The third annual award, which is being presented to **the Faculty Academy and the IT Academic Computing Team** (the Team), recognizes the work that these colleagues have done over the past four academic years, transitioning the campus to a new learning management system (LMS) in the midst of a global pandemic.

During 2018 and 2019, the Team led our campus in thorough, thoughtful review of LMS options, resulting in the selection of D2L's Brightspace. They developed a strategic plan for implementation and completed contract negotiations by the end of 2019. UIndy gained access to begin integration of Brightspace in January 2020. This work had just begun when the pandemic struck in March of the same year.

“At the beginning of the pandemic, when we were presented with a situation none of us could have ever envisioned, the Faculty Academy and IT Academic Computing team stepped up to create a strategy for moving the campus online,” explained UIndy Interim Vice President and Provost Mary Beth Bagg. “At the end of that first semester, when it was clear we would be facing the challenge for some time to come, these teams continued to lead the way by developing readily available online resources, coordinating hardware and software purchases to meet faculty and student needs, and implementing a communication strategy that included the Faculty Academy Extenders and regular meetings with the Provost's Council. They also successfully delivered an array of virtual education sessions to support faculty through several stressful semesters. All of this was going on at the same time the Faculty Academy and the IT Academic Computing Team were transitioning the campus from ACE to Brightspace! They were still able to facilitate a smooth, on-schedule LMS transition, reacting quickly to faculty suggestions and challenges. For this work and much more, we owe all in the Faculty Academy and IT Academic Computing Team our gratitude for their support, grace, and service to the UIndy community.”

How They Did It

In March 2020, the University abruptly transitioned from primarily face-to-face course delivery to 100-percent remote course delivery, as a result of the sudden onset of the coronavirus pandemic. The Team recognized that the faculty's ability to meet the expectations of this emergency remote teaching fell squarely on their shoulders. The Team worked tirelessly, seven days a week, to support faculty as they transitioned and taught approximately 2,000 course sections in an online format from March through the end of the semester.

As it became clear that the pandemic would continue to impact course delivery for the next academic year, the Team spent the summer of 2020 completely revamping web-based resources and developing a communication plan to ensure faculty were fully informed about how they would need to design and deliver their courses online. The emergency strategies from the previous semester no longer sufficed. The Faculty Academy Extender group was officially launched, with representatives from every academic unit meeting regularly with the Faculty Academy and IT Academic Computing Team to facilitate communication and service to individual faculty.

In anticipation of the many workshops and one-on-one sessions necessary to ready the campus for primarily online course delivery during the fall 2020 semester, the Team agreed to complete all summer vacations before August 1. At that time, all team members would be all-in.

In addition to campus-wide training required for the LMS, the Team was also managing the purchasing, deployment and training required for various hardware and software requests, and equipping classrooms around campus.

This heightened state of preparation and training became the new routine for the start of each "pandemic semester," beginning in fall 2020: Prepare online resources for faculty comfortable with self-serve learning. Develop and deliver pertinent virtual training for faculty. Meet weekly with the Faculty Extenders. Problem-solve the challenges that emerged from Faculty Extenders and Help Desk requests. Serve as higher-level support for the Faculty Extenders. Manage all requests for support coming directly to the Faculty Academy.

The challenges the Team faced forced them to accomplish more without new resources. Their work became very strategic, always trying — and usually succeeding — to stay at least one semester ahead of what faculty needed to successfully deliver courses.

Meanwhile, part of the Team's effort had to be focused on a successful transition to Brightspace. Piloting began in fall 2020, with two faculty members offering four online courses with Brightspace. The Team worked closely with these faculty to support, learn and problem-solve. At the same time, they were developing resources and training additional faculty for the pilot expansion to come during second semester, when 47 online courses would be successfully delivered via Brightspace. Also during second semester, the Team rolled out training to support the faculty's efforts to transition course materials out of ACE and into Brightspace. All told, 1,427 courses were transitioned from ACE to Brightspace, and although some of this occurred in a somewhat automated fashion, it was necessary for staff to review every course transition to ensure a successful outcome.

In anticipation of a full Brightspace transition for fall 2021, the Team developed and rolled out faculty training during spring and summer of that year. Again, vacations were scheduled in July to allow all-hands-on-deck support for faculty beginning August 1. When the final accounting for the semester was tallied, there were 2,763 Brightspace sections (zero in ACE), and more than 25 formal Brightspace training sessions had been delivered to faculty.

The result of this hard work was a smooth start to the semester. It was not without some hiccups, but using the now well-established communication structure facilitated by the Faculty Extenders, the Team was able to gather feedback and disseminate solutions efficiently and effectively. By the beginning of second semester, spring 2022, the transition to Brightspace was complete, with all courses, all semesters transitioned and ACE sections in “cold storage.”

Faculty continue to have self-service access to Brightspace training materials, as well as a robust frequently-asked-questions webpage and a 24/7 Help Desk. For those faculty who prefer a more hands-on approach, Brightspace training is offered periodically throughout the academic year and one-on-one sessions with staff are available on demand.

It would be an incomplete picture not to include the ever-present efforts of the Faculty Development aspect of the Faculty Academy, whose usual work continued and was even enhanced during this time. Faculty Fellows offered workshops and book groups. New Faculty Orientation took place. Amanda Miller added a new weekly communication, *Did You Know*, to the communication strategy. Planning for the OpEd Project’s Public Voices Fellowship program began in academic year 2020, and the first cohort of OpEd Fellows was launched in academic year 2021.

Today, we recognize these colleagues who are part of **the Faculty Academy and IT Academic Computing Team** for stewardship of the University’s mission from 2018 to 2022 (in alphabetical order): *Gail Cooper, Carla Downing, Michelle Duman, Carla Harper, Beth Kiggins, Amanda Miller and Serdar Oguz.*

We realize the cumulative significance of their collaborations developed over a period of at least four years. Members of the Team were called to work together as a cohesive unit in ways that no one could have foreseen. They, along with the rest of the UIndy faculty and staff, mustered a collective effort that was nothing less than extraordinary.

And the work goes on. Even now, these faculty and staff leaders are strategizing for the future. The Team has also been meeting with leadership from the faculty and Faculty Senate to strategize an approach for enhancing faculty development toward excellence in teaching, with a focus on all teaching modalities. This new initiative will be piloted with the New Faculty cohort for 2022-2023.

The University of Indianapolis congratulates the Faculty Academy and IT Academic Computing Team on being the 2022 Roberts Circle Award winners.

**UNIVERSITY OF
INDIANAPOLIS**

1400 East Hanna Avenue
Indianapolis, Indiana 46227
317-788-3368