Enhancing Purdue University’s Service to Indiana

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No single public undertaking has done more in the past three decades for the general good of the people of Indiana than the improvement of our streets and highways. It is gratifying that Purdue University has been able to cooperate through its road schools and through its engineering teaching and research programs in this important public service from the very beginning. The first Road School was held 32 years ago, or two years before the State Highway Commission was first set up in 1917, and four years before it began its operations under the laws of the State of Indiana.

You who are connected with the highway program of Indiana have reasons to be proud of the accomplishments up to date of the State Highway Commission, the County Engineers and Surveyors, the County Road Supervisors, the County and Street Commissioners, the City Engineers, the Traffic Engineers, the Highway Contractors, and the Highway Materials and Equipment Association. A total of $450,000,000 has been disbursed during the past 26 years by the State Highway Commission in increasing the mileage of improved roads from 3,211 miles in 1920 to 10,432 miles in 1945, to meet the needs of an increase in motor-vehicles registration from 286,150 in 1919 to 1,068,356 in 1945. In 1924 Indiana had only 482 miles of high-type paved roads, as compared with 5,781 miles in 1945.

You who have cooperated so effectively in connection with the Purdue Road School have made it possible for Purdue University, through the Joint Highway Research Project, to contribute during the past ten years much new knowledge of special value to the entire nation. I am confident that this research program has developed new knowledge which gives the taxpayer greater returns for money expended on highway construction. The Joint Highway Research Project has not only created new knowledge, while preparing more creative engineers for the public works of Indiana, but has also benefited other states, as evidenced by the posts held in Virginia, Kentucky, and other localities by individuals who acquired special knowledge through their services on the
research project made possible by the Highway Commission of Indiana. These researches have also been of great value to our country during the Second World War, by supplying special knowledge of value to the armed forces in connection with the location and construction of airports and roads for military use. The system developed in the Purdue Engineering Experiment Station for identifying soils by aerial photographs has great significance in connection with all types of airport and highway construction. A report on the major accomplishments of the Joint Highway Research Project during the past decade has been released as a bulletin of the Engineering Experiment Station of Purdue University.

Those of us who are interested in enhancing the services of Purdue University to the State of Indiana are of the opinion that more of our engineering graduates, particularly those in the field of civil engineering, should be encouraged to make public service their career. We should like to see more of our graduates aid in the solution of the engineering problems of the public works of the Indiana cities and counties, and of the state. We are confident that this can be brought about if the cities, counties, and state departments make maximum use of our undergraduate engineering students during their summer vacations. A number of the leading industries of the country make it a practice to employ engineering students during their summer vacations. This gives them an opportunity to interest the best of such college students in permanent employment with their organizations. May I urge the State Highway Department, other state agencies concerned with engineering problems, and Indiana cities and counties to employ our graduate students during their summer vacation. To make this definite, will my colleague, Professor Ben H. Petty, act as the representative of Purdue University in connection with the carrying out of this suggestion? That is, Indiana state, county, and city agencies interested in employing Purdue University engineering students next summer should contact Professor Petty promptly, as the demand for such services by our students from industries is great.

May I take this occasion again to thank the State Highway Commission and the other agencies who have cooperated in this Road School so effectively for the encouragement which you have given to Purdue University in connection with its services to the State of Indiana.