

# Office of Academic Affairs

## VCAA News February 2008

---

Dear Colleagues,

If I had to think of one word that would be a marker of Chancellor Reck's tenure at IU South Bend, it would be "retention." From the first days of her arrival to our campus in 2001, the chancellor has repeatedly reminded us that we are champions of retention. Such thinking foretells the current mood among state legislators about the alarming rate of attrition at colleges and universities. When my siblings and I were in college, completing a degree in four years was the norm. Currently, the norm is approximately six years.

Many of the students we serve are first generation college attendees; they have family obligations either as caregivers or parents. Many work part-time to pay for college; others are fully employed and are attending college to advance their careers. All of our students aspire to achieve the personal and professional success that a college degree facilitates.

At IU South Bend our six year graduation rate is 26%. I've often expressed to the campus community that our retention rate should be higher given the special characteristics of our university --- the low faculty to student ratio, the extraordinary interest in teaching among the faculty, the intimate ambience of the campus setting, the strong student academic services, the engagement of faculty with students in research, the distinctiveness of our general education program, the devoted interest in advising by faculty and professional staff, and the mix of non-traditional and traditional learners.

Even though the campus has dedicated considerable resources and efforts in assuring the success of each student. We need to learn more about why students do not persist. Since we know that effective advising is a key component of student success, a committee of faculty and staff advisors has been examining our campus' approaches to student advising. I expect a report by mid-March and I will share the committee's findings and recommendations with the campus.

Another effort that is gaining broader attention on campus is the expansion of U100, the college skills class. Last summer Randy Isaacson convened a series of workshops with U100 faculty to address teaching strategies, student motivation, learning styles, test effectiveness, attitudinal expectations and behaviors of millennium learners. In the Fall of 2007, seventeen sections of U100 were offered. We are optimistic that an assessment currently being done by Randy and John Novak will indicate a higher success rate for those students in U100 than among those with like academic preparation who did not take U100.

This now brings me to President McRobbie's request that each campus set aside 1% of its non-academic budget for the next five years to address retention. This initiative is called "Degrees of Excellence," and it is our campus' desire to build on the work done by Randy in U100 and by others in student services. Our new vice chancellor for student affairs, Jeff Jones, has taken the leadership in partnership with Randy, John, academic affairs, and student affairs staff, in preparing IU South Bend's response to the challenges set forth by President McRobbie in Degrees of Excellence. The proposal has been vetted by the Enrollment Management Committee and the chancellor's cabinet.

I also want to take this opportunity to welcome to the campus the new director of housing, Paula Smith. We are confident that student housing will also be a key factor in retention in the future. We, in Academic Affairs, look forward to working with Paula in developing programming for student housing, and eventually in establishing learning communities.

### Assessment

- The Assessment Committee will be sponsoring an assessment workshop on Friday, March 28th. Doug Davenport, of Truman University, will be presenting two half-day assessment workshops. One will be on using assessment in the classroom. The other will be on identifying standardized institutional-effectiveness measures that could be used at IU South Bend and examining what assessment instruments might be locally developed. Related to this, Dr. Davenport plans to address issues related to assessing general education, which affects many departments but is not "owned" by any one of them.

Seating is limited, so if you are interested in attending, please contact [rculbert@iusb.edu](mailto:rculbert@iusb.edu) to make a reservation.

- Assessment grants are available for a wide variety of academic assessment projects. Awards of up to \$3000 can be used to attend a conference, pilot a standardized or locally developed assessment test, research improvement in academic advising or any number of other types of projects. Please submit your proposal by March 1st for consideration in this round of grants. Guidelines and application forms, as well as examples of previous grant projects, are available at: <http://www.iusb.edu/~sbassess/grants/granhome.shtml>

### Update

Due to a lack of qualified applicants we have cancelled the search for the Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Programs and Research. I will be working closely with the faculty and the Academic Cabinet to decide the future of that office.

### Kudos

- To Eileen Bender and Rebecca Torstrick for receiving the all-university W. George Pinnell Award for Outstanding Service. The campus is deeply indebted to them for their continuous and high quality service to the campus over the years, but we want to particularly express our gratitude to them for their leadership of the Higher Learning Commission Self-Study that earned special recognition by the commission as an outstanding report. At the commission's annual meeting Eileen, Becky and Linda Fritschner will represent IU South Bend in the Resource Room where institutions preparing self-studies can learn from those already successful in their re-accreditations. If imitation is the highest form of flattery, we look forward to welcoming to our campus later this month, a team of faculty and staff from IU Kokomo who will interact and learn from our self-study team in preparation for their own re-accreditation efforts.
- To Neovi Karakatsanis for receiving the President's Award for teaching excellence. Neovi, as well as Eileen and Becky, will be honored at the IU Founder's Day ceremony on March 30<sup>th</sup>.
- To Lesley Walker for receiving an Arts and Humanities New Perspectives grant of \$18,600 for her project, *New Paradigms in French Revolutionary Studies: A Franco-American Colloquium*.
- To James VanderVeen for receiving an Arts and Humanities New Frontiers grant for \$48,645 for his project, *Pre-Columbian Pottery and the Construction of Social Meaning*.
- To Randy Isaacson for his recognition as the first recipient of the IU South Bend Alumni Association's Legacy Award. This award recognizes faculty who have had a significant impact on the lives of students.

Sincerely,

Alfred J. Guillaume, Jr.  
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

---