Colleagues, last year we had the good fortune of reminiscing together about our accomplishments of the previous ten years. I count as blessings the successes we’ve shared, and perhaps more importantly, I’ve learned from our shortcomings and failings. However gratifying or humbling these experiences were, the beauty of toiling together reaped many rewards and brought us closer as a community of scholars and learners. Today, we continue in our zeal, carrying forward IU’s expansive educational mission. Here at IU South Bend, we do so purposefully through engagement with our Michiana community. This was never more evident when two weeks ago the South Bend Symphony introduced to the world Jorgé Muniz’s spectacular oratorio, *Requiem for the Innocent*, a haunting prayer in music for world peace and understanding, a metaphor for hope.

I can imagine no life more gratifying than that of professor and student engaged in discovery and learning. Our interactions with students, our research, our cultural and artistic endeavors, our programmatic connections with business and industry, enrich the society in which we live. In my addresses to the senate, I’ve made many references to what makes great universities stand apart. As a public university, we have a particular obligation to engage our community. This engagement is underscored in the Regional Campus Blueprint for Student Attainment. The message is clear; how do regional campuses maximize their educational resources efficiently and effectively in service to their communities? In answering that question, we must not be stymied by a crisis of imagination.

This is particularly critical in light of the current public scrutiny of higher education. In my 2007 address, I dared us to think of ourselves as a great institution of higher learning, to think purposefully and skillfully about our public mission. I am heartened that we have made enormous strides, but as the public inquires more about our educational practices and demands to see demonstrable results, the sterling polish of our successes becomes tarnished. If we truly aspire to be great, there is more to be done.

In our Academic Cabinet discussions of academic policy and practice, Rob Ducoffe rightfully reminds us that we are measured by our output. We can’t be great if our six year graduation rate is 27%. Nor is it is acceptable to have one third attrition from first to second year. To our credit we are taking measurable steps, allied with Student Services, to alleviate these embarrassing statistics. Our Noel-Levitz consultants have been working with us for several months examining our practices in recruitment, admissions, advising, marketing and web design. Improvements across all these areas will make us a stronger institution, better equipped to serve the economic, civic, and cultural needs of our community.

The Blueprint for Student Attainment is our call to action. Our campus’ hope lies not in the past, but in the still to be scripted future. My message to you today has a sense of urgency; let’s not
dawdle in idle dreaming about past accomplishments, but rather let’s make haste in shaping what we aspire to be.

A fair question is how might we design that future? The deans and I began that deliberation in our retreat earlier this fall. Two documents nurtured our thinking: our most recent Strategic Plan with its eight goals and IU’s Blueprint for Student Attainment at Regional Campuses. From the former, we aspire to be affordable and accessible; support the discovery of knowledge; improve student retention and degree completion; increase experiential and global learning; increase diversity among all segments of our university community; be the environmental steward for economic, social and cultural vitality of our region; incorporate new technologies in teaching and learning; and finally, provide a quality working and learning environment. These goals re-packaged from earlier campus priorities require purposeful and concentrated efforts! However, this time around, they are enveloped by the regional campus blueprint that gives an urgency and added emphasis to their attainment. The objectives of the framework; competitive educational experience, student success, nimbleness and accessibility, distinctive education linked to communities, and development of our region; are a backdrop to the work that we must do.

Completion rates, time to degree, inaccessible scheduling, and inattention to transferability of credits can no longer be ignored. Like Charles Baudelaire’s albatross, they weigh heavily on us. Unless we find solutions, others will. We may already have dallied too long. The remedy for much of the perceived ills in higher education has been the introduction of dual high school/college credits such that, in some cases, students finish with a high school diploma and an associate’s degree simultaneously. Not surprisingly, there is strong interest in the state in developing common core curricula and cross-campus course transfers that make little distinction about course content or quality. There is a heightened urgency across the state, and throughout the nation, to increase the number of college graduates for the workforce. President Obama wants our nation by 2025 to once again lead the world in the proportion of its citizenry with a college degree. These external pressures could threaten our autonomy or spur us to purposeful and creative action.

Colleagues, given these concerns, I argue for creative action and ask what will each of us do? To remain idle permits solutions to be co-opted by state agencies and legislative mandates. It is up to us, the faculty, to take responsibility in making and re-making the university, in offering concrete solutions that protect academic integrity. I proffer an answer and offer an opportunity. Each of us, each major program, each departmental faculty, need to join our colleagues in Student Services and come to terms with what it means to serve the students who enroll here, to keep them here, and to support their success.

In haste to correct deficiencies and increase the number of college graduates, distinctions between being credentialed and being educated become blurred; a college degree is devalued, reduced simply to a consumer product, a commodity. In my view, there is a crisis in higher education that threatens fundamental understandings of democracy, a point brought closer to home by Elizabeth Dunn in her first address to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences faculty when she
reminded them that the innovation of their teaching and research fuels the engines of democracy. The cultivation of the mind through the creative arts, social sciences, and humanities supplanted by skills training alone, jeopardizes the core of what makes civilizations prosper. For a democracy to flourish, it requires citizens with the high level thinking, computational and reasoning skills that a broad based liberal arts education provides. As a community of scholars and learners, we should listen attentively to the cacophony of strident voices that demand change and transparency; we should welcome the dialogue, and bring pragmatic solutions to increasing the number of college graduates, and to stemming the tide of high school attrition, particularly among minority groups. A fundamental question for me is what will be our role, yours and mine, in shaping these discussions and determining the remedies?

Perhaps the answer is already being formulated through the work of the six university-wide Blueprint task forces. I am hopeful that the outcomes of these conversations will bear more fruit than those emanating from Mission Differentiation of a few years ago. Then the promise and expectation were that regional campuses would mold their distinctive identity. Now the focus is less on identity and more concentrated on bringing clarity to the purpose and mission of the regional campuses in maximizing their collective strengths to the betterment of their respective communities. From that framework campuses are more likely to develop singular strengths. We need to make conscious decisions, informed by your involvement, about what those strengths should be.

That is why the deans and I have determined that the next few years are critically important as we transition to the future. During our retreat we considered two questions: What are the three to four things most important in Academic Affairs that need to be accomplished within the next two years? And, equally important, “What are the long-term opportunities for growth and achievement?”

Consensus began to build quickly around several priorities. First, if higher education is to succeed with the next generation of students in alleviating or substantially decreasing the need for developmental education, it requires seamless educational expectations in K-12 and better alignment of educational objectives between K-12 and universities. Under Dean Horvath’s leadership, the College of Education is engaged with our community in addressing these issues. The School of Education faculty is working with the Early College program at Riley High School. Dean Horvath is working with United Way in its Education Impact committee to alleviate the attrition problem, and several of our faculty are working with Adams’ International Baccalaureate Program. In the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Dean Dunn is beginning to work with Dean Horvath in making the connections with our K-12 partners. These are just a few examples of IU South Bend’s active participation in shaping educational practices and policy within our region.

Second, graduate education surfaces as a priority. Graduate enrollment has steadily dwindled in the last few years. Setting aside what we already know about changes in teacher re-certification and flexible scheduling from proprietary schools, we need a better handle on the root causes that make graduate education less appealing here at IU South Bend. To that end, we have begun discussions with our consultants, Noel-Levitz, for guidance. They are already working admirably with
us in retention and advising. But it is not solely the role of Noel-Levitz to offer strategies; we, the faculty, must re-think the delivery and mix of graduate education. Within my office, the management of graduate education has been given a higher priority with the appointment of Linda Chen as assistant vice chancellor for academic affairs. Linda has already engaged many of you in conversation.

Third, we also recognize the importance of technology in delivering twenty-first century high quality education. Indiana University is one of the leading universities nationwide in this endeavor; the new IT Strategic Plan, appropriately titled, Empowering People, lays out clear objectives in sustaining IU’s leadership in technology applications. Its aim is to make IT “more ‘human-centric,’ so that the activities of students, faculty, and staff can be performed more effectively and efficiently.” Locally, enormous strides have been made in smart classrooms and other technology applications that enhance teaching and learning. To assure continuous improvement, Chancellor Reck has appointed an ad-hoc committee to examine best practices in information technology delivery and services and to determine appropriate innovative strategies that enhance teaching and learning here at IU South Bend. The desired goal is to ensure nimbleness and flexible adaptation in our funding and use of technology.

And finally, if all these things are to occur, the ability to attract and retain outstanding faculty demands prompt attention to faculty salaries. Over the years in the hiring of new faculty, the salary gap between assistant professors and associate professors has narrowed. But the problem of salary compression is further exacerbated between associate professors and professors. Clearly, if we are to remain competitive these imbalances must be corrected. The last equity study was done by an external agency in 2002, resulting in modest salary adjustments. Timing is ripe for an additional study. The deans and I propose that we spend the remainder of this semester studying the issue with a desired outcome of presenting in the spring recommendations for corrective action. Naturally, we understand that under the current cloud of economic downturn, there are significant barriers to any re-alignment of salaries. Nevertheless, we believe that it is a prudent step to undertake. At the very least, we must know where we place in comparison to our peers.

If we accomplish these four objectives within the next two years, I’ll be delighted. But as you are readily aware, academic administration functions on several strata simultaneously and there are many other activities directed toward improving educational quality at the university that are imperative in our quest to be the standard of excellence among IU’s regional campuses. The Operational Plan to realize strategic objectives lays out myriad tasks, among which are our continuous attention to improving our graduation rate and accelerating time to degree. External pressure from state agencies demands that we align our university curricula with Ivy Tech. For several years, we’ve had open dialogue with our disciplinary counterparts at Ivy Tech; much has been accomplished, but conversations must persist, if we are to maintain autonomy in course content and delivery. I’m grateful for the strong partnership that currently exists between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs in formulating solutions that advance student progress. Led by Karen
White, I’ve been particularly impressed with Academic Connections that seeks to make early connections with students as they advance toward degree attainment.

For several weeks, I’ve been working with Elizabeth Dunn, Jeff Jones, Rebecca Brittenham and Randy Isaacson in sketching a framework for a first-year experience at IU South Bend. Our hope is that a pilot program will begin no later than Fall of 2011. As you read in my most recent newsletter, I participated with the Arts and Sciences’ chairs in a Reacting to the Past exercise examining Darwin’s merit to receive the Copley Medal. The exercise was an exhilarating learning experience that, in my view, would be an excellent first-year experience to engage students. Since one size does not fit all, other models under consideration link U100 with English, or with general education courses. The aim is to provide choices for students to pursue first-year experiences based on interest and suitability.

Concomitant with our earnestness in being engaged with our surrounding communities, I would like to see strengthened the infrastructures for the Civil Rights Heritage Center/Natatorium, our Center for a Sustainable Future and the American Democracy Project. These initiatives show promise of bringing singular distinction to IU South Bend. For the Natatorium this means raising 1.5 million dollars in endowment for programming and taking title of the building as an IU property. Similarly, internal and external funding for the Center for a Sustainable Future allows it to continue to innovate and to have a more reliable base for entrepreneurial activities with like-minded business enterprises, industry and government. Wonderful work engaging students has been done for several years in the American Democracy Project, but each year ADP has had to scrape dollars together for its programs. Base funding must be established for ADP to meet its objectives.

I’m confident that these things are within reach. Great universities dare to reach beyond the ends of the horizon. We will educate students to think independently, to make fair judgment, to think critically and expansively about what they learn and observe, and to understand their responsibilities to the world at large. That is the sacred bond we have with our students and the stewardship we have with our community.

For eleven years, I have served as your vice chancellor. During that time I’ve witnessed a sixty-percent change in the tenured/tenure track faculty. Like the poet, Guillaume Apollinaire, I marvel at fleeting time and ponder “Où sont les neiges d’antan?” (Where are the snows of yesteryear?). Chronologically, they may seem long years, but time’s passing has been shortened by the joy received. Experience has taught me that we are the faculty that dare to be different; we value academic excellence and relish fashioning it in the way only IU South Bend can. That’s what drew me here, and that is what sustains me in my role as chief academic officer. But I can’t stay forever, so if there is a sense of urgency in my message, it is simply this. Our Strategic Plan and the Blueprint offer enormous opportunities for us to re-think our university. There is much at stake. What will be our response? In what ways will we shepherd the dialogue on accountability, efficiency and effectiveness? We need your creativity and energy. I need each of you to become involved. Within the next two years we must dedicate ourselves to seeking solutions. Failure to do so less-
ens our autonomy and deprives us of opportunity in defining the character of our university and the way we serve our region. It is imperative that you join the deans and me in removing the barriers that hold us back from being numbered among the great universities.

I began my remarks this morning by evoking memory and celebration; celebration of our time together and celebration of the exemplary and powerful ambition of Jorgé Muniz’s composition. And so it is fitting that I close with a litany of celebrations:

Within the Raclin School of the Arts, we celebrate the gifts to our community in the cultural, visual and performing arts;

Within the School of Business and Economics, we celebrate outstanding student performance on the ETS Business Field Exit exams as evidence of excellence in teaching and learning; we celebrate the school’s ever growing entrepreneurial nature and its dedicated community partnerships; and we celebrate the research contributions of faculty to maintain AACSB accreditation;

Within the School of Education, we celebrate aggressive program development, engagement with local schools and visibility within the community; and we celebrate the faculty’s growing scholarly productivity;

Within the College of Health Sciences, we celebrate the health service to the campus community; we celebrate the diversity of the student body and the increased number of men and under-represented groups completing BSN degrees;

Within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, we celebrate the scholarly productivity of faculty, including books, published conference proceedings and several dozens articles along with two major NSF grants; we celebrate the opening of the Natatorium, which exemplifies the university’s commitment to social justice; we celebrate the Center for a Sustainable Future, confirming our pledge to environmental responsibility and the American Democracy Project for educating our students on their responsibilities as world-citizens;

Within Library and Media Services, we celebrate the advancement of technology in inquiry and learning; we celebrate the dedicated librarians and staff;

Within Extended Learning Services, we celebrate growth of the Elkhart Center and growth in distance learning;

And I celebrate each one of you. The celebration of our work in the academy was aptly captured by Eileen Bender, our beloved deceased friend and colleague: “The tightrope trajectory of learning makes us see more than we could have imagined, reach inner and indestructible heights, and celebrate, with the exuberant joy of the dance, our shared work as teachers.”

Thank you.