Dear Colleagues,

The long awaited visit of the Higher learning Commission’s re-accreditation team will begin November 12th. Our campus has worked arduously and with diligence in preparing our self-study in anticipation of our guests. Thanks to the leadership of co-chairs Eileen Bender and Rebecca Torstrick and to countless faculty, staff, and students whose engagement in this process was a labor of devotion to our university, I am confident that our HLC consultant/evaluators will find a more vibrant university than at the last re-accreditation process seven years ago. I am deeply indebted to everyone on campus who participated in the focus groups and read and studied carefully the self-study. By this time next week, we can begin to celebrate what surely will be a successful visit.

I also want to use this space to thank, in advance, our consultant/evaluators for their diligence in reviewing our self-study and for the engagement that each of them will have with our campus community. I am confident that they will be pleased with the honest dialogue that we will have with them. I am equally certain that the HLC team will appreciate that our self-study is a frank examination of our university’s strengths and a fair assessment of areas that need further attention for development.

The re-accreditation process is also an excellent opportunity for the university to take advantage of the expertise and advice of the HLC consultant/evaluators. I anticipate that the university will receive the maximum re-accreditation of ten years. Since the last re-accreditation, which was for only seven years, the university has made enormous strides in administrative stability, fiscal management and in fostering academic excellence in teaching, student learning, and faculty and student research and community engagement.

Planning for the Future

Strong universities engage in continuous assessment and improvement. Immediately after the HLC visit, the university will begin the very detailed process of engaging the university community and its external community in the development of the next strategic plan that will build beyond the “bridge to the future.” There is already a firm foundation for doing so. In my annual address to the senate, I urged that we, the faculty, administration and staff, begin thinking of what it would take for IU South Bend to move from a good university to a great one. I encouraged us to be bold thinkers, to dream about the characteristics of a great university, and to begin thinking about IU South Bend’s character and identity in the next five years. When we begin to reflect upon the last five years, the university’s advancements make an excellent progress report. But new opportunities and challenges loom. The challenge for us will be to think more globally about our values, about who we are and what we will become. The goal for us is to be a great public university serving the region powerfully and skillfully, with character and purpose. To accomplish this will require a conscious act of self-definition.

Our self-study has laid the groundwork. And in preparation for the next self-study, we will begin with an environmental scanning of our institution and its relatedness to our external community. To assist in this process, a consultant has been engaged. The anticipated outcome is that by the end of this academic year, we will have a strategic plan that charts in a purposeful way the university’s path toward higher greatness. It will be a communal effort of faculty, staff, students, administrators and community friends.

I look forward to working with each of you in the important work of moving our university from good to great. Our work will begin shortly after the consultant/evaluators leave campus. Your participation in charting our university’s future is essential. Thanking you in advance, I remain

Sincerely,
Alfred J. Guillaume, Jr.