Dear Colleagues,

Have you noticed the change in the air? The fresh scent of the morning breeze? The soft glowing light of the late afternoon? Nature is surely trumpeting the advent of autumn. This cyclical transformation of shorter days and cooler nights reminds us that winter lurks nearby. And this year’s almanac suggests that winter may linger longer. Like a guest who overstays his welcome, I’ll soon want winter’s quick departure.

You will notice that this edition of the VCAA News has a new look, thanks to the creative talents of Johnny McIntosh, the new associate vice chancellor for academic affairs. In the future, hopefully by November, you will be able to find on the Academic Affairs webpage pictures and biographical information on the newly hired full-time faculty.

In anticipation of next month’s annual address to the senate, I’ve been meeting groups of faculty to explore how the university can best advance its educational mission. I’ve invited faculty to talk about technology in teaching and learning, retention, advising, and the creative process. With others I’ve been examining the role of a public university, particularly, that of a
regional university. If you recall, I began the discussion on the role of a public university in last fall's senate address. In that address I challenged the faculty to explore with me, in purposeful ways, the role that IU South Bend should play in the community it serves. I further encouraged us to examine how IU South Bend can maximize its strengths into a singular identity. A strong and vibrant public university works assertively to advance the public good. Ultimately, we will be judged by the sincerity and the quality of our engagement. As I begin to think about this year’s address to the senate, I am focusing foremost on the creative processes through which we re-imagine our university for the common good. Moving from a good university to a great one requires a disciplined and strategic approach in our march toward distinction. And, although good universities advance along multiple paths in their quest for excellence, we at IU South Bend must know our community in practical and figurative ways, its strengths and its potentials as well as the aspirations of those who make this region home. We must do it with resolve, commitment and purpose. That is why the environmental scanning currently underway is important as we prepare for the next strategic plan.

The evidence suggests already that we are moving steadily and purposefully in the right direction toward establishing ourselves as the premier public university of our region. Our sustainability initiatives are a concrete example. Thanks to the creative energy and leadership of Michele Verges over the last three years, the campus, with community and corporate partners, has held a massive recycling campaign of plastics and Styrofoam. From last year’s campus theme on sustainability emerged the Center for a Sustainable Future. Under Mike Keen’s leadership and his inexhaustible trove of creative ideas, the center has the potential to become a marker of distinction for the campus. The focus on ‘green’ communities is front and center in newspaper headlines, magazine articles, and in educational publications like the Chronicle of Higher Education. As a public university, we are already exercising our community responsibility so prominently voiced in the center’s mission statement: “Campus and community working together to meet the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The goals of the center are equally ambitious: Contribute to campus differentiation; create a new center of distinction and excellence; build upon sustainability efforts already established; provide a platform for sponsored research in sustainability; open up currently unharvested areas for development efforts; offer students and faculty important new teaching and learning opportunities; support local and regional sustainable economic growth; offer opportunity for new international partnerships; use campus resources wisely. A new committee on sustainability, comprised of faculty and staff, will drive these efforts and will advise the campus in ‘green’ operations and in the effective use of its natural and material resources. Already, faculty are engaged in the development of a new minor in Sustainability Studies. Several discussions that drive bold dreams are occurring on campus. What about possibly retrofitting an existing facility into ‘green’ usages or developing an Eco-House as a teaching laboratory. Additionally, the campus is seeking LEED certification for the Community Building of the recently developed student housing. Moving from good to great will require sustained efforts like these across campus among faculty, staff, students and community partners.

In thinking about the future for IU South Bend, I recommend that each of us read the Indiana Commission for Higher Education report Reaching Higher: Strategic Initiatives for Higher Education in Indiana. The Academic Cabinet will be discussing this document at its meeting next week. The document links the future economic growth and competitiveness to the strength of public higher education in Indiana. Universities like ours play the most critical role in developing citizens who enter the workforce with a world view of exploration, discovery and informed action.

The Causeries that we began during the Higher Learning Commission self-study continue. These Friday afternoon chats at my home among faculty and staff with the chancellor and me spotlight a chosen topic. Our discussions end with a taste of New Orleans. My “Who Dat” apron beckons the crowd to a bayou feast of red beans and rice, shrimp Creole, Shrimp Clemenceau, gumbo, jambalaya or a well-seasoned eggplant. Retention was the topic of the first causerie. The minutes are found at this link. The topic of the November 7th causerie is advising. Invitations are forthcoming. Y’all come now!

Kudos to Peter Aghimien for his extraordinary teaching this last spring at the Université de Toulon-Var. Reports from Toulon indicate that students from several countries learned as much from the informal chats with Peter as in the classroom.

Kudos to Theo Randall who taught students this summer in The Gambia, West Africa. He sent me a picture (see right) of him with his students. Theo told me of the immensely personally gratifying experience for him in teaching students whose enthusiasm for learning belied their very modest living
Kudos to Lesley Walker for her successful international colloquium on “French Paradigms for Revolutionary Studies: French-American Colloquium.” The French and American scholars who gathered at Notre Dame and IU South Bend remarked on the beauty of our campus and the warmth that envelops it.

Before closing, I’d like to remind faculty to submit their mid-term grades for freshmen by October 13 at 5 pm. This report process is important to allow students the opportunity to know how they are doing at the midway point in the semester and to allow for intervention, if necessary. This is important to the students but it is also vital to our retention efforts.

Sincerely,

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

Morris K. Udall Scholarship

Leda Hall continues to serve as the faculty representative for the Morris K. Udall Fellowship. A Udall Scholar will demonstrate “the understanding and shaping of environmental issues, through research, policy, public service, natural resource management, the arts, agriculture, health care, and/or community involvement.” Interested students must have a college grade-point average of at least a “B,” be a full-time student during AY 2009-2010 academic year and a U.S. citizen, national, or U.S. permanent resident. Further information can be obtained from Professor Hall and udall.gov. Applications are due February 3, 2009.

Reaching Higher / ICHE

Reaching Higher: Strategic Initiatives for Higher Education in Indiana is an initiative of the Indiana Commission for Higher Education (ICHE). As stated in the objective of the initiative: “To thrive as a state and as individuals, all Hoosiers will need to achieve a depth and breadth of education never seen in the state’s history.” This document contains recommendations in six focus areas and may be found at http://www.che.state.in.us/ReachingHigher.shtml

Deans’ Seminar

The second Deans’ Seminar of the year will be held, Friday October 17th at noon in the UCET Classroom. Michelle Verges, Assistant Professor of Psychology, will make a presentation about her research entitled “Role of (Human) Nature on Environmental Action” which will focus on her efforts to apply cognitive science to the study of environmentalism. As always, drinks will be available and please feel free to bring your lunch. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Award/Grant Opportunities:

Nominations for the IU South Bend Distinguished Research Award are due by November 1st to Erika Zynda (ezmanda@iusb.edu; AI246C), Coordinator of Contracts and Grants. Eligibility and procedures may be found at http://www.iusb.edu/~acadaff/awards/research.html

The Library Prize for Undergraduate Research nominations are due to Michelle Russo, Dean of Library Services by February 2, 2009. The prize is sponsored by the IU South Bend Library and Media Services and is “designed to honor students who demonstrate sophisticated research skill by incorporating information found through the library’s resources into original scholarship.” Details regarding eligibility, criteria, and the application process may be found at http://www.iusb.edu/~libg/about/libraryprize.shtml

Grants for Graduate Students: The Graduate Student Research, Service, and Leadership (RSL) Grant Program is a competitive funding program for full- or part-time graduate students that provides support for research, service, or leadership projects. Details about the RSL grants as well as the Graduate Travel Grant Program may be found at http://www.iusb.edu/~graduate/graduategrant.shtml