Dear Colleagues,

Events within the last few weeks have brought issues of race to the forefront of news commentary - the tearful embrace of Attorney General Eric Holder by the daughter of the staunch segregationist, the late Governor George Wallace, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the march across the Selma bridge; Eric Holder’s own assessment that when it comes to race in America “we are a nation of cowards;” a reporter’s apologetic question to President Obama wondering if it is okay to ask about race; and most recently, the death of John Hope Franklin, the pioneer scholar of African American history (listen to the NPR StoryCorps of his encounter with racial hostility as a Boy Scout http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyid=102401101). As I reflect on each of these news stories, I’m pulled back to the summer of 1963. The Civil Rights Movement that had begun several years earlier with Rosa Parks’ courageous defiance weighed heavily on our national consciousness. Yet somehow, the angst surrounding racial equality that gripped our nation appeared to have glossed over New Orleans, a city whose cultural ties were deeply entrenched in miscegenation. Although there was legal separation, the racial divide of that exotic Caribbean European city appeared not to be as stark, as customary in the Confederate South. Because of the city’s colorful history, New Orleans seemed, at least on the surface, more open to and accepting of black and white
proximity. Until that summer, I felt distant from the struggles of racial equality and seemingly untouched by segregation’s shame. Perhaps, it was my youthful naiveté; more likely it was my parents’ determined resolve to shield my siblings and me from the inevitable consequence of feeling inferior, segregation’s vituperative sting. And among Black Catholics, the church also served as a buffer.

Still there was no escape from knowing that being colored meant being different. My earliest recollections of racial prejudice can be traced to two incidents. As a young boy, on a visit with my father to the downtown post office where he worked, I noticed several people behind desks and wondered loudly the location of my father’s. An interminable and awkward silence ensued. Not until later in life did I begin to comprehend my father’s uneasiness, and maybe his embarrassment; it had never dawned on me that Negroes worked hidden from public view. The other incident, similar to what Rosa Parks experienced, but with a markedly different outcome, occurred the day when my maternal grandmother and I, seated behind the “colored” sign on the bus, were obliged to abandon our seats and stand when a young white man got on the bus and placed the sign behind us.

But things changed for me that sweltering summer of 1963. With restlessness of a teenager, I could no longer remain impervious to segregation’s dehumanization. I worked that summer as a volunteer with the Coordinating Council of Greater New Orleans teaching elderly blacks the preamble to the Constitution in preparation for voter registration. Zealots in our determination, we teenagers knocked door to door. Although not yet old enough to vote, we knew voting was essential to equality and full citizenship. Repeatedly our efforts were thwarted when dozens were denied eligibility because of mistakes in their recitations. Toward the end of the summer, we began daily marches in front of City Hall. The police left us pretty much alone, and when they tired of us, we were arrested, placed in holding pens until we were released to the custody of our parents. My activism as a civil rights demonstrator ended abruptly the day we were fingerprinted. That caused much consternation in my family’s household for fear that a bright future for me was forever tarnished.

All of these memories of a youthful past are very much connected to the values I hold as an educator. Here at IU South Bend the values of diversity, of understanding that differences among cultural, racial, ethnic, religious groups can unite rather than divide are integrated into the University’s mission statement and fully functional in its general education curriculum as well as in the ways the University conducts its business. Beginning this week is a series of three campus conversations aimed at broader understandings of the richness of diversity. These Diversity Dialogues (link), sponsored by the Office of Academic Affairs, the Diversity Committee and various student groups, provide an opportunity for our campus community to dialogue about global issues of diversity from the Israeli/Palestinian conflict to re-examining the relevance of race in American society in the aftermath of the presidential election. What I most cherish about our American university and its educational aims is this civil exchange of ideas, where debate leads to broader understandings of opposing sides. This is the alpha and omega of an integrated approach to learning rooted in the examination of fact and hypothesis that enlighten and reveal that Eureka moment.

And this is why I firmly believe that what each of you do, as faculty and staff in your daily contacts with students in the classroom or on the campus at large, is vitally important in helping students appreciate their individual responsibilities in a global society. Imparting knowledge through healthy debate and exchange allows our students to learn with confidence and to grow as independent thinkers. This past Friday morning, I had the pleasure of welcoming and introducing our invited speaker for the tenth anniversary of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning conference. In my impromptu remarks, I spoke of the engagement and commitment of IU South Bend faculty to innovate, re-create and re-discover in their teaching the tools to maximize student learning. As I explained to the audience, the evidence is indisputable in the thoughtful commentaries on teaching that I read each year in the Promotion, Tenure and Review documents.

Last spring I attended the annual IU FACET (Faculty Colloquium for Excellence in Teaching) Conference in southern Indiana. This gathering of extraordinary faculty is an excellent opportunity for faculty to learn from one another unique teaching strategies and innovative classroom techniques. In the past, I’ve attended workshops by Randy Isaacson whose inimitable passion for teaching is mesmerizing. But last year, I was enthralled by Sara Sage’s presentation on effective teaching using poetry. I listened attentively to Sara’s explanation of how she uses poetry as a bridge to student attitudes toward learning and mastery of content matter. As she expertly explained, beginning a class session with poetry allows both the professor and the students to create a more “welcoming space,” that in the momentary silence of listening and innovating, the gaps to learning are lessened and the boundaries that prevent learning tumble. In a note to me several days later, Sara speculated on what it would be like if we began each Academic Senate meeting with a poem. Hmmm... Perhaps, angst about budget would be soothed by poetry’s mystic lyricism. In her FACET session titled, “The Courage to Teach: Using Poetry to Connect with Your Inner Teacher,” Sara introduced a poem by Mary Oliver, “The Summer Day,” that ended with the verse, “Tell me what is it you plan to do/with your one wild and precious life?” An interesting question, I’m still pondering.

Kudos to this year’s FACET awardees, April Lidinsky, Isabel O’Connor, and Henry Scott who will be inducted into FACET on May 15 at the annual FACET Retreat. What might they say about their teaching?

Best wishes for a splendid spring. We’ll ignore yesterday’s snowfall.

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

Congratulations to the Raclin School of the Arts for the receipt of a $7,500 in funding received from the National Endowment for the Arts to support performances of American Masterpieces Chamber Music by the Euclid Quartet.

On April 3rd, the annual Publications Reception honoring faculty who published during 2008 was held in the Administration Building. Congratulations to all those faculty who published their scholarly and creative works in 2008. (publications link)

International Food Fest

On Saturday, April 11 from 3-6 pm the annual International Food Fest sponsored by ISO will be held in the Grille. The event will include food, costumes and entertainment from around the world. Video invitations are posted at http://www.iusb.edu/~sbintl/events.shtml

Early Childhood Conference Held

Extended Learning Services sponsored their annual early childhood conference in March with many presenters from the School of Education. This year’s conference theme was Caring for Children in Your Neighborhood. Hedda Sharapan was the keynote speaker and presented on, “What do you do with the mad that you feel?” Ms. Sharapan worked for 43 years on the popular children’s television show Mr. Rogers Neighborhood.

Student Recognition

Four students from the School of Education will be recognized at the Indiana Association of Colleges for Teacher Education’s annual luncheon in Indianapolis on April 17th. These outstanding future educators include Alma Galicia, Ivy Butler, Nichole Lynn Hess, and Joseph John Solfronk. In addition, Vince Bauters has been recognized as an Outstanding Future Reading Teacher by the Indiana Reading Professors Council.

Undergrad Research Conference Date

April 24: To spotlight and recognize research, scholarly and creative works by undergrads. website

Schimmrigk: Dean’s Seminar

The final Dean’s Seminar of the year will be held, Friday April 17th at noon in the UCET Classroom. Rolf Schimmrigk, Associate Professor of Physics in the Department of Physics and Astronomy, will make a presentation about his research entitled "The Nature of Spacetime in Physics." Rolf will provide an historical perspective to the link between time and space in science as well as how current research approaches this issue. As always, drinks will be available and please feel free to bring your lunch. I look forward to seeing you all there.

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Counseling & Human Services

The Counseling and Human Services program annual spring conference was held on March 6 at the Madison Center Geropsych Building. This year’s speaker, Dr. Jeff Ashby from Georgia State University, is a nationally recognized expert in the areas of play and adventure based counseling. Approximately 80 students and professionals from the community were in attendance.

Faculty Honors

Congratulations to the IU South Bend recipients of All-IU Awards. The formal award ceremony took place on March 27 at a dinner in Bloomington as part of Founder’s Day events. Pictured to the right at the reception prior to dinner are (right to left): P.N. Saksena (BUSE), President’s Award for teaching excellence; Elizabeth Bennion (POLs), W. George Pinnell Award for service; Linda Young (EDUC), Part-time Teaching Award – Online information about the recipients may be found at the IU Home Pages website at http://homepages.indiana.edu/web/page/normal/10385.html

Left to right: Linda Young, Elizabeth Bennion, P.N. Saksena.