Dear Colleagues,

As is customary during this annual spring ritual, students last night donned cap and gown, regaling in the time honored tradition that celebrates hard work, persistence, student achievement and academic excellence. Although our graduates visibly relished the joyous occasion of commencement that brought finality to their university education, the reality is that we, the faculty, have been preparing them for the unfurling wonders and challenges ahead. Commencement is their initial journey into a life of endless adventure, new possibilities, and limitless potential for learning and growth. If we have prepared them well, we can rest assuredly that they crossed the stage as transformed individuals, equipped with expanded and informed knowledge, confident that their transformation is a perpetual process of unending inquisitiveness about the world around them. Our hope is that they continue to stretch their assumptions, that they search relentlessly for new ideas and that they will have the courage of their convictions to be open to and understanding of the ideals and ideas that differ from their own.

Several years ago, on the occasion of our graduation ceremony, I aired a commentary for the American Democracy Project on our local public radio on the meaning of public education. My
musings, reflections on the role of the university in preparing its graduate for an active participation in our democracy, are repeated below with slight variations.

Last night in a traditional ceremony of pomp and circumstance, graduates of Indiana University South Bend marched proudly across the stage greeted by IU President Michael McRobbie and IU South Bend Chancellor Una Mae Reck. Their accomplishment in completing a university degree has enormous significance in a state that ranks forty-third in the number of its citizens with a college degree. Whether these graduates are aware, or fully appreciate it, they have been transformed. If their education has been successful, their learning experience has tested their core beliefs, changed their assumptions, and challenged them to think more openly about their humanity and their place in the world. If the graduates form judgments based on critical and analytical thinking, if they can imagine the daily lives and values of people who seem different than themselves, if they can communicate with clarity and purpose, and take action with confidence, then we have equipped them to be engaged and responsible world citizens.

For a democratic and free society requires an expansive vision of an educated populace. Access to today’s university education is meant to be open to all, and it increasingly transcends the boundaries of race, class, gender, life situation, ethnicity and national origin. IU South Bend’s core values are anchored firmly in providing access and affordability to all citizens of Northern Indiana.

A democratic society also requires an expansive vision for its public university. We know, of course, that the region depends on the university to provide an educated and skilled workforce. We know that education sustains economic growth, and as the economy grows, the quality of life advances. We see new technologies and scientific discoveries. We understand ourselves better and we appreciate the world around us more through the social sciences and the arts.

But a public university can play an even more expansive, transformative, even visionary role in our region. As a center for research and for the exchange of views, the university can form community partnerships that do more than pass along information. For example, when WVPE and IU South Bend invite us to contribute a commentary, we do so because we believe that new insights about our democracy will come more quickly to Michiana not through dictation but through exchange and collaboration among the students, teachers, politicians, doctors, ministers, activists and others who confidently share their views. So, too, is IU South Bend’s community engagement project with the Engmann Natatorium an example of public purpose and commitment. In partnership with the City of South Bend and the South Bend Heritage Foundation, IU South Bend makes real its stewardship of active citizenship with the community it serves. The Natatorium Project bridges a painful past with the promises of a brighter historical future of hope and reconciliation.

This past spring the university presented opportunity for a shared inquiry into one of our era’s most pressing problems in a series of campus conversations called “Another Point of View” centered on diverse opinions on topics ranging from Palestine/Israel Relations, to Genocide in Africa. In the fall, through the Campus Theme, and the One Book, One Campus project, the university community will be engaged in dialogue about the American cultural experience through examination of rural and urban life and their significant markings on our democratic society. Together we will look for ways to delve into engaged and fruitful conversations that help us to better understand ourselves and to more fully appreciate the different cultural expressions that unite us as Americans. In examining these complex and discrete issues, we will create community and enjoy a transformative exchange that expands our lives. Such is an inexorable by-product of higher education.

So how will our graduates fare in a world where individual achievement and competition are valued and rewarded? Will they use their education simply for personal gain? Or will they work for the betterment of their community? Just as we need these graduates to have an expansive vision of their role in our region and in the world, we need our public university to step up to a new level of active citizenship, to comport itself generously and skillfully in the region and in the global community.

I close in wishing our graduates happiness and success in their pursuit of professional goals and personal ambitions. I applaud their achievements and I honor all that they have learned from us. May they continue to grow in learning and wisdom, and may they remain forever faithful to their alma mater.

This is my last VCAA News for the Academic Year 2008-2009. The next edition will appear in August. Best wishes to each of you over the summer months.

Sincerely,

Alfred J. Guillaume, Jr.,
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Kudos to the faculty and students in the Dental Clinic for receiving well-deserved praise from a client who writes: “Just a short note to let you know what a pleasant experience I had as a hygiene patient at the facility on Riverside Dr. Having recently retired and losing my dental insurance, I decided to take the big chance and go through the Clinic at IUSB. Let me tell you that it was a surprising experience for myself (dental chair sissy). The students were excellent, intelligent and very professional. The staff likewise.”

Kudos to Peter Bushnell who heard from one of his students, a third year medical student in Arizona who writes: “…I still thank my lucky stars that I not only took A&P (Anatomy and Physiology) before embarking on this journey but that I took an exceptional course in A&P—indeed, one of the best...classes anywhere! I routinely draw on the knowledge of the stuff you taught us!”

Kudos to John Novak who as captain of the strategic planning process has steered the campus into an insightful and rewarding environmental scanning process with our consultant Joel Lapin.

Kudos to Kenneth Smith and Dina Harris upon receipt of a grant from the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County to support the Wolfson Press series “On Their Shoulders.”

Kudos to the Euclid Quartet and Dean Marvin Curtis on their NEA funding listed under American Masterpieces: Chamber Music. This award was one of only 33 nationwide and was the only one in Indiana.

Congratulations to the Undergraduate Research Council and especially all the students who participated in the Undergraduate Research Conference held on April 24th on campus. Nearly 100 students took part in the day’s events, including oral presentations, posters and panels. The event was well attended and the high-quality, vitality and variety of research conducted by our undergraduates were displayed. The program and information about the conference can be found at the undergraduate research site.

Kudos also to the undergraduates in Psychology who presented posters of their research at sessions held on campus in late April. The 27 students conducted their research under the directions of Dennis Rodriguez and Kevin Ladd. Pictures of their posters will be posted soon at the Psychology Department website. Congratulations and best wishes to faculty members who retire this year. On May 11th a reception was held at which these outstanding faculty were recognized and honored for their many years of service to the campus and its students. The faculty honored (pictured above) were Marcia Sheridan (Education), Margaret Scanlan (English), and Lynn Williams (Mathematics and Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences). We thank them and wish the best for them in their retirement.

Congratulations to Daniel DeBrule (Psychology) and John McIntosh (Psychology and Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs) who recently received a competitive gift for $200,000 from a 1st Source trust. This gift will support research and training on mental health and suicide by DeBrule and McIntosh and especially student involvement in research on these important topics.

Kudos to Teresa Santos, a student in the Raclin School of the Arts who received her degree last night (along with her oldest son) and who has been accepted into the Latino Studies Museum fellow program at the Smithsonian Institute. Teresa will be moving to Washington, DC for the summer to take part in this exciting program.

Congratulations to the School of Business & Economics on the publication of their SB&E Annual Report. The report chronicles the efforts and accomplishments of the Business faculty and alums and may be viewed at this link.

Kudos to International Programs and its director Scott Sernau on an activity-filled semester. The variety of events and students involved in them may be found in their spring newsletter.