May 1, 2013

Dear IUPUI Staff,

Thank you for all you do! The Task Force on Staff Talent was recently recognized as the most actively engaged of all of the stakeholder groups in the strategic planning process. You go above and beyond, and many times you are the unsung heroes. Although I don’t think it is expressed enough, I would like to thank you for all you do and remind all of you that you are all important to the success of IUPUI.

I see three important stakeholders in our academic institution: students, faculty and staff. Our success is measured by our ability to educate our students and transform them into talented, employable graduates. Our faculty and staff are vital to this success. I think we lose out when we begin making distinctions between faculty, those employees who have academic tasks, and those whose work is administrative, secretarial, technical, or professional. We lose the understanding that we are all part of the IUPUI family and we all are important.

How successful would a university be if the only employees were faculty? Without students where would we be? Without faculty how could we succeed? One of the requirements for any successful organization is that its key members and employees see themselves as being important and needed in the same family, group, or team. Think about siblings arguing over who the mother or father likes best. There is no more effective way to waste energy than attempting to find out who is more important, and it helps nobody. No one should be allowed to look down on people in any part of the IUPUI organization because of job titles or job duties.

Our faculty provide the teaching and research functions that represent IUPUI’s core business, and all staff need to recognize that and work accordingly to facilitate this function. But we are all part of the IUPUI employee family, and we are all needed. I cringe when I hear the title non-academic staff, which is often used to describe all our employees who are not professors, lecturers or researchers. I think it is degrading to define a group of people by saying what it is they are not.

As we progress in our strategic planning, I am excited to see staff recognized for their hard work and to hear discussions from our administration about the importance of our staff. The future IUPUI will recognize all staff as a valued investment; will offer our staff career development, mentoring, and continuing education; will offer benefits that are adaptable to individual needs and recognize the evolution of the family; will develop an established tradition of communication between staff, administration, and faculty; and will make strategic investments in programs and personnel to establish a workplace which respects the value and importance of work/life balance for all employees.

I think we can get it right in our strategic planning.

K. Lee Stone, President