NCA Accreditation Advisory Committee Meeting
Friday, November 21, 2014, 1:30 pm, Conference Room, 17th floor, IIT Tower

Participants:
Siva Balasubramanian (Chair*, Stuart School of Business*), Charles Uth (*Galvin Library*),
Ray Trygstad (*School of Applied Technology*), Devin Savage (*Galvin Library*), Christine Provost (Manager, Office of the CIO), Carol Emmons (*Office of Assessment*), Phil Troyk (*Armour College*), and Lauren Woods (*IIT Online*).

Approval of Draft Meeting Notes for meeting on October 24, 2014:

Members unanimously approved the draft meeting notes for the last committee meeting (October 24, 2014) that was previously distributed.

Student Persistence and Completion/Quality Improvement Initiative subcommittee:

Charles Uth noted that the feedback from the mentors of the HLC Academy for Student Persistence and Completion Roundtable event was very positive. The provided good suggestions for us to move forward on our data analyses. We have to provide a report to the Academy in about 6 months. Our preliminary work indicates that Math 148 and Math 151 are really critical to success in student persistence and completion.

Phil Troyk cautioned that we have to be careful in providing appropriate context and interpretation to any conclusions drawn from our data analyses. The focus should be on using such insights for appropriate screening by advisors to identify students who may need extra assistance. On the other hand, if the advisors use this type of information in a negative way, our students could get demoralized or even wonder why they are continuing at IIT. We certainly do not want the latter outcome.

Siva Balasubramanian agreed with Phil's point. At a general level, HLC wants us to assure transparency in everything we do, so that all our deliberations are accessible to the university committee. At the same time, any insights that we learn from our deliberations should be presented as policy recommendations from our committee. We are not involved in deciding policy, we only recommend policy. That is an important distinction.

Phil requested clarification on students who enter our university with no intention to graduate, but just to attend for a year or two. Do we have data on this, and what is such information based on? Charles stated that survey data presented by other institutions at the HLC roundtable event indicated that many students enrolled had no desire to graduate from that campus. Their educational objectives were short-term oriented as far as that particular institution was concerned.

Carol Emmons observed that, at IIT, it is possible that a small but significant fraction of very high performing students may leave the university before graduation. Phil indicated that this fraction was as

high as 40% based on some data that he and Matt Bauer analyzed. Carol responded that an additional question will be administered in Spring 2015 in the NSSE survey asking students if they wish to stay at IIT until graduation. If we get a high response rate, that will provide data useful to us. Carol also indicated that if students were to leave IIT to pursue further study at another institution, the National Student Clearing House can be used to track such students over time.

Phil asked about exit interviews with students who decide to leave IIT before graduation. Exit interviews were discontinued about 5 years ago, but Carol Orze is considering reviving such interviews. A problem with this approach, however, is that we often do not know that a student has dropped out until they stop attending courses on campus, and it is often difficult to reach him/her after that.

Assessment subcommittee:

Carol provided a status report on the Assessment process on campus. She noted that 38 (out of 142) academic programs on campus did not meet expectations. Provost Cramb has indicated that the Deans are responsible for assuring progress on assessment.

The discussion then focused on the five subcommittees that were constituted to put together the assurance document (each subcommittee will focus on one of the five HLC accreditation criteria). Siva mentioned that he planned to meet with David Baker and other colleagues serving the subcommittee that were responsible for Criterion 5. Carol mentioned that her subcommittee on Criterion 4 attempted to identify potential issues, and had initiated conversations with Gerry Doyle on career management data. Siva mentioned that the discussions within each subcommittee should have firm timelines and deliverables. Siva will encourage appropriate leadership within each subcommittee to set appropriate agenda, timeline and tasks.

HLC Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education/Online Education:

At Siva's request, Lauren Woods presented an overview of the document titled "HLC Guidelines on Distance Education" that was previously distributed. Lauren noted that all our online programs are derivatives i.e., they are almost exactly the same as the materials taught for on the ground or "face-to-face" delivery mode on campus. She stated that we have 28 programs online but none of these programs are exclusively online-only programs. They are all derivatives of face-to-face, on-ground programs offered on campus.

Carol observed that a lot of institutions are trying to enter the online education business by simply acquiring online programs from third parties, and that HLC may worry about these cases because of quality issues. To the extent that our online programs are derivatives of those offered on campus, HLC is less likely to be concerned about IIT. Lauren noted that this could be good or bad depending on perspective. The good aspect was that it ties the online curriculum more directly with qualified faculty. The bad aspect is that our faculty may not really differentiate between the teaching effort needed for online and face-to-face modes such that learning objectives are accomplished seamlessly. For example, our faculty may be more inclined to equate online teaching with lecture capture, and may not engage

actively with remote students in a manner that facilitates student learning. Online teaching needs to incorporate/integrate best practices in order to be successful, and that requires specialized faculty training.

Questions were raised about resource access for our online students, such as library resources, ARC, student orientation sessions, advising, and career placement services. Lauren responded by noting that we have a distance learning library. IIT has over 200 courses in a typical semester that are offered as online sections of courses. We define our online students by the section of the course they are taking in a given semester (that is not the way how online students are typically defined). Additionally, on-campus students often visit online content to reinforce learning.

Lauren emphasized that IIT needs to make sure that the content offered online is consistent, and that the faculty teaching online courses should follow best practices. We need to focus on what the standards are that IIT expects our faculty to follow if they are teaching an online course. IIT is now an institutional member of the *Online Learning Consortium* (OLC) whereby our faculty members have free access to a lot of resources on their website. In addition, OLC offers programs and courses that our faculty can utilize (in conjunction with *IIT Online*) in order to get trained in online teaching.

Phil observed that the skills and training needed to excel in the classroom for traditional courses (on ground delivery) can be quite different from those needed to assure success in online teaching. The differences could indeed by very stark. Sometimes, the content of a particular course may be more amenable to online teaching than other courses, so we have to recognize that some of the differences could be driven by the instructor, and the rest could be driven by the content taught. Lauren noted that, in order to succeed in online teaching, the best results are possible if the course was designed from scratch with online teaching in mind. For example, *IIT Online* has an associate director who can specifically help our faculty to design online courses.

We are now trying to make online courses even more blended (a truly blended course is where all participants are engaged in "face-to-face" learning in a traditional classroom environment, but everyone is also involved in some type of online activity. This approach is promising because a lot of our online students are those who also take on campus courses.

Meeting adjourned.