Through the pages of this self-study, it has been a pleasure to review the progress that the University of North Dakota has made in the years since the last comprehensive visit for reaccreditation by the Higher Learning Commission in 2003.

Many of the pages describe achievements of which we can be genuinely proud. For example, we note the implementation of impressive new programs that are improving student learning, including our Essential Studies program of general education, our SCALE-UP classroom for helping students in STEM fields that include more problem-solving experiences in earlier years of college, and our first-year seminars designed to improve the transitions students make to the university environment. Chapters describe planning efforts focusing on strengthening the University through better coordination in enrollment management, retention, and diversity. In addition, we have supported, and continue to build on, our status as a Research University to foster research activities with our faculty, graduate students and undergraduate students. Other pages describe some of our on-going challenges. For example, faculty salaries continue to be lower than we’d like, despite significant progress, and libraries do a phenomenal job of delivering research and instructional materials and support but additional resources are still needed.

Many chapters describe important behind-the-scenes work on this campus and in this state to continue positioning UND to provide a top-notch education to students from their first year through doctoral studies. We’ve hired a new Vice President for University and Public Affairs. This administrative addition is enabling us to better coordinate relationships with the community and state. Staff and administrators in Academic Affairs work more closely with their counterparts in Student Affairs than ever before. Thanks in part to strong support from legislators and the State Board of Higher Education, UND has maintained a stable resource base through a decade that has been extraordinarily challenging. Slow and steady growth – in students, in programs, in facilities, in faculty, in quality – has characterized those years. Today’s University of North Dakota is a better institution as a result of the careful and continuing attention that faculty, staff, administrators, legislators, and community leaders continue to devote.

This self-study, written in part for the Higher Learning Commission, also represents the launch of a renewed focus on the Exceptional UND vision and agenda. Through an extensive process of input from stakeholders including students, faculty, and staff, the University community reached consensus on a series of next steps designed to fulfill that vision. The self-study documents both the progress that has already occurred and the work yet to be done. During upcoming years, members of the University community can expect that the findings of the self-study will provide both a baseline and a springboard for the work yet to occur.

It is with enthusiasm that we prepare as a campus to host the team from the Higher Learning Commission. And, it is with great enthusiasm that we prepare for the Exceptional UND that will continue to be realized in the years ahead.

Robert O. Kelley, President