

936 words/ 6.4 minutes

“Renewing and Strengthening a Sacred Trust:
Celebrating the Gayle Karch Cook Center for Public Arts and Humanities”
Sign Unveiling Ceremony
Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie
President, Indiana University
Maxwell Hall Grand Hall
Friday, April 9, 2021
4:00 p.m.

1. MAKING THE CASE FOR THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Thank you very much, Lauren.

Just over 20 years ago, Indiana University’s 16th president, Myles Brand, devoted his 2000 State of the University speech to addressing the future of the arts and humanities.

His call to action remains as relevant today as it was then. “We must do our best to make the case for the humanities and the arts,” President Brand said, “for as they thrive or wither, so do our professional and science programs, so do our universities and, indeed, our culture.”¹

Today, we gather to celebrate a new IU center that will yet further demonstrate the value of the arts and humanities on the Bloomington campus and in our culture—the Gayle Karch Cook Center for Public Arts and Humanities.

As you have heard today, it brings together the campus’s public-facing arts and humanities centers, facilitating greater collaboration and impact.

¹ Myles Brand, State of the University 2000, “The Arts and Humanities,” delivered October 10, 2020, Web, Accessed April 2, 2021, URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20010413180003/http://www.indiana.edu/president/speeches/state00.htm>.

2. CELEBRATING THE SPLENDID RENOVATION OF MAXWELL HALL

This iconic building, which is now the Cook Center's home, the splendidly renovated Maxwell Hall, is the third oldest building on the Bloomington campus. It was designed by Indianapolis architect George Bunting, who also designed Wylie and Owen Halls. It is one of the most beautiful buildings on the IU campus. Among its many superb architectural features are this grand and stately space with its magnificent fireplace and the lovely, quiet, and serene courtyard, recently so wonderfully renovated and repurposed, out at which this room looks.

Constructed in 1890, the building was dedicated on January 20, 1891, as the university library—in fact, its original name was Library Hall. It was renamed Maxwell Hall in 1894 to honor David H. Maxwell, who has been called “the father of Indiana University,” and his son, Dr. James D. Maxwell, both of whom were longtime members of the IU Board of Trustees.

Historian Thomas Clark wrote that Maxwell Hall was variously described as having the appearance of “a Roman temple, a Hoosier schoolhouse, (and) a trailing limestone arbutus”² and that the many changes made to its original plan over the years reflected the impact of constant departmental change.

Indeed, by the early 1950s, the building had been home to the university library, the central administration, the Office of the Registrar, the deans of men and women, liberal arts, and the School of Law. In more recent years, it was home to the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and a number of units within the office, including the University Division.

Maxwell Hall has undergone many changes during its 130 years, the latest, of course, being its renovation to serve as the Gayle Karch Cook Center for Public Arts and Humanities, which will nurture the talent and creativity of our students, faculty, and staff,

² Thomas D. Clark, *Indiana University: Midwestern Pioneer, Volume III, Years of Fulfillment*, (Indiana University Press, 1977), 185.

and build upon IU's magnificent arts and cultural traditions that we are proud to share with the entire community.

3. CELEBRATING GAYLE KARCH COOK

In thanking those who helped make this new center possible, we must begin, of course, with the woman for whom it is named, Gayle Cook.

Gayle, her late husband, Bill, and the entire Cook family have long been among Indiana University's greatest partners and supporters. Over the course of more than a half-century, the family's vision and support have expanded opportunities in the IU School of Medicine, the Jacobs School of Music, the School of Education, the Wells Scholars Program, IU Athletics, and many other areas. The Cook family is truly among the ranks of only a few families in the history of IU who have left an indelible mark on the university with their great vision and generosity.

Gayle's remarkably generous support for this center will further IU's reputation as a national leader in underscoring the educational importance and public value of the arts and humanities and the integral role they continue to play in our daily lives. And for that we are deeply and most sincerely grateful.

4. SPECIAL THANKS

I also want to thank Provost Lauren Robel for all she has done to help make this splendid new center a reality. Most of you are likely aware that Lauren recently announced her intention to step down as provost and return to the Maurer School of Law faculty at the end of this academic year. We will have further opportunities in the coming weeks to honor Provost Robel for her outstanding service to the campus, but I know that all of you will join me in thanking her today for all she has done to support the

arts and humanities at IU Bloomington during her nine years of spectacular achievement as provost.

I also want to commend Professor Ed Comentale, director of the IU Arts and Humanities Council—and all of the directors, affiliated faculty, and staff of all of the centers that comprise the Cook Center—for their dedicated efforts that have helped us reach this day.

5. CONCLUSION: TAKING A SACRED TRUST TO HEART

President Brand concluded his 2000 State of the University Address, to which I referred earlier, by saying, “Our responsibility to support research, scholarship, and creative work in the humanities and the arts reaches past each of us into the world of our children and their children. Humanists and artists,” Brand continued, “have a sacred trust to transmit the past to the future and to add their own creative voices to the continuing dialogue about our shared humanity. We must take that sacred trust to heart.”³

The Gayle Karch Cook Center for Public Arts and Humanities will provide yet a further way, on a campus rich with such opportunities, for the humanists and artists of this campus to add their creative voices to the continuing dialogue about our shared humanity and renew and strengthen that sacred trust.

Thank you very much.

(Ed Comentale returns to the podium and closes the program, then invites guests to gather outside to officially unveil the new sign. Once guests are gathered at the sign, President McRobbie invites Provost Robel and Gayle Cook to join in removing the

³ Myles Brand, State of the University 2000, “The Arts and Humanities,” delivered October 10, 2020, Web, Accessed April 2, 2021, URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20010413180003/http://www.indiana.edu/president/speeches/state00.htm>.

drape. The program is followed by a photo opportunity, and the formal program concludes.)

6. UNVEILING THE SIGN (OUTSIDE)

Thank you for joining us for this final special moment of today's celebration.

I invite Gayle Cook and Provost Robel to join me in unveiling the sign that bears the name of the Gayle Karch Cook Center for Public Arts and Humanities.