

“Incubating Excellence at Indiana University”

Indiana University Innovation Center Dedication

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President

Indiana University

University Gym

Tenth and the Bypass

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1. INTRODUCTION

In his famous 1945 report “Science: The Endless Frontier,” Vannevar Bush remarked on the importance of scientific research— specifically penicillin and radar— in helping with the war effort. He then wrote, “What we often forget are the millions of pay envelopes on a peacetime Saturday night which are filled because new products and new industries have provided jobs for countless Americans. Science made that possible, too.”¹

At such a pivotal moment in history, Mr. Bush clearly saw the vital link between scientific research and economic progress. Today, as we dedicate the Indiana University Innovation Center, we continue to recognize that vital link.

¹ Bush, Vannevar. “Science: The Endless Frontier.” Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1945. <<http://www.nsv.gov/od/lpa/nsf50/vbush1945.htm>>. Quotation is found in the introduction to Chapter 1 (section title: “Scientific Progress is Essential”).

2. A GREAT HISTORY OF INVENTION AND INNOVATION

Indiana University's long and rich history of inventions and innovations has helped us reach this great milestone. As far back as the 1930s, our researchers were filing patents on inventions that had implications far beyond the laboratory.

Among early inventions was Dr. Rolla Harger's "Drunkometer." Invented in 1931, it was the first portable and practical machine to test blood alcohol content. Later that decade, Dr. Roland C. Davis of the Department of Psychology developed a lie-detection device designed to electrically measure a subject's level of excitement.

Around that same time, Dr. L.Y. Mazzini, a professor in the IU School of Medicine who was working for the Indiana State Board of Health, developed a faster, more accurate test for syphilis, which, in the 1930s, was a major public health problem.

And, of course, there is the iconic story of Crest Toothpaste. Beginning in 1945, Joseph Muhler pursued the idea that fluorides were the solution to the problem of tooth decay. Dr. Muhler's team, which included Drs. Harry Day, Grant Van Huysen, and William Nebergall, caught the attention of Procter and Gamble, who began supporting their research in 1949.

In 1956, Crest toothpaste went on sale nationally with the Muhler team's fluoride formula and was later endorsed by the American Dental Association.

3. THE COMPLEXITY OF THE PRESENT

Today, our researchers and scientists continue to travel along that road of discovery, as they unlock the protein structures that protect viruses, develop nanotechnology for cancer treatments, and use x-ray crystallography, cryoelectric microscopes, and drift tubes to conduct their basic research.

To answer increasingly complicated questions about the building blocks of life, treatments for disease, and the safety of our environment— to offer just three of thousands of examples—increasingly requires experts from multiple disciplines. And these are not just the scientific disciplines. To translate those answers into goods and services that will help society requires the business acumen so concentrated here at Indiana University.

4. AT THE FRONTIERS OF SCIENCE AND BUSINESS

The magnificent facility we are dedicating today reinforces the vital necessity for interdisciplinary and collaborative work on the frontiers of science and business. This new, \$10 million, 40,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility focuses squarely on incubating and translating the most creative research inventions and innovations from IU's faculty, staff, and students into new companies and products.

In doing so, it will contribute to the economic development of Bloomington and Indiana. We also expect that this facility will provide a hub for partnerships between the IT and life sciences industry and IU researchers, as well as an outstanding environment for IU students to learn and participate first hand in entrepreneurship.

5. THE FRUIT OF TRANSLATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

This kind of collaborative, translational teaching, research, and entrepreneurial partnership is already yielding outstanding results. Educational software provider Angel Learning, which got its start at the IU Emerging Technology Center (or the IUETC) in Indianapolis, was acquired earlier this year for around \$100 million dollars, the largest technology commercialization transaction in which IU has ever participated and one of the largest of its kind in the nation.

And right now, Dr. George Stookey's Therametric Technologies, which develops instruments for dental cavity detection, is in the process of graduating from the IUETC and will be moving to a new larger facility in Noblesville. Coincidentally, Dr. Stookey, as a graduate student, was involved in the Crest Toothpaste research.

These are but two of the many other examples I could offer of businesses that take research ideas from IU laboratories to the marketplace, and this is precisely the kind of activity we expect the IU Innovation Center to facilitate over time. This facility, which houses staff of the Indiana University Research & Technology Corporation, is already home to the IU Pervasive Technology Institute and will soon also provide offices for the Johnson Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

Of course, it also includes space for new IT and life sciences startups. In fact, the second floor will be equipped with wet-lab space that has been in short supply on the Bloomington campus and that is vitally necessary for life sciences research and innovation. Bringing together so many people from across the university creates a heightened environment for innovation in which solutions are right around the corner rather than being across campus, across town, or an hour up the highway. This is the kind of synergy that led IU faculty and staff to file a record 167 patent applications just last year. This is the kind of synergy that led to 1,839 inventions, 466 patents, and 38 startup companies growing out of IU research. And this is the kind of synergy that has led to over \$2.1 billion in sponsored research awards for IU researchers over the last five years.

That is more than all of Indiana's public and private research universities combined. And this kind of synergy translates into economic development for the city of Bloomington and the state of Indiana.

6. GRATITUDE FOR GREAT PROGRESS ON A SHORT TIMELINE

It may be difficult to believe, but it has been less than a year since we broke ground on this project in 2008. That we have been able to move this project forward so quickly has required the concerted effort of many groups and individuals I would like to recognize and thank.

First, let me express our gratitude to the Indiana General Assembly for the support they have given us over the years. I would also like to thank the Lilly Endowment for its longstanding support of Indiana University. Their generous \$30 million gift in 1999 led to the establishment of the Pervasive Technology Laboratories, which has since evolved into the Pervasive Technology Institute further funded by the Lilly Endowment with a \$15 million grant.

I would also like to recognize the Johnson family for their great generosity to Indiana University and their support of the Kelley School of Business in particular. We still mourn Dick's passing earlier this year, but hope that his own entrepreneurial spirit will fill this building.

Finally, I would be remiss if I failed to recognize the tireless efforts of a few additional people who have been involved in this project from its conception. Vice President Bill Stephan has dedicated himself to Indiana University's engagement efforts across the state. His extremely capable and steady leadership has helped enable the university, even at a time of great economic difficulty, to redouble our role as an economic engine within the state, and he deserves our recognition.

I would also like to acknowledge the tremendous efforts that Tony Armstrong, President and CEO of the IURTC, has dedicated to the university's engagement across the state and to this project in particular. In addition, I would like to thank Professor Ted Widlanski, who chaired the incubator task force, was instrumental on design issues, and

provided vital faculty input. Finally, thanks to Leslie Greene and her colleagues at StoneBelt for being such good neighbors through the construction process.

7. CONCLUSION

In 1936, IU's tenth president William Lowe Bryan spoke movingly about the importance of scientific progress. President Bryan said, "It is useless to talk about a holiday in science. It is futile—will not be done. In the manufactories, in the universities, in the dental schools—everywhere— real scientific research will be carried on and will be brought to bear more and more upon every practical problem."²

This we can still say today with a slight difference. Real scientific research will be carried on— in collaboration with partners both inside and outside the university— to generate innovations that will change our world and improve our lives. This truly gives us reason to celebrate.

² Bryan, William Lowe. "The Outlook in Higher Education." American Association of Dental Schools Thirteenth Annual Meeting. 1936. Indiana University Archives. <<http://www.libraries.iub.edu/index.php?pageId=93>>.