

1174 words/ 8 minutes

235 words/ 1.6 minutes: intro of Dr. Shekhar

Announcing the Inaugural
Grand Challenges Research Initiative
Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie
President, Indiana University
Skyline Club
OneAmerica Tower
Indianapolis, IN
Monday, June 20, 2016
10:30 a.m.

1. INTRODUCTION

Thank you very much, Fred.

And thank all of you for joining us this morning for this announcement of the inaugural project chosen to be funded through Indiana University's Grand Challenges Research Program after an exhaustive process of evaluation and competition stretching back over six months.

I am very pleased to welcome a number of members of the Indiana University Board of Trustees who are with us this morning. I will ask them to stand as I introduce them, and I ask that you hold your applause until all are introduced. With us are: the Vice Chair of the Trustees, MaryEllen Bishop of Carmel; Phillip Eskew, Jr. of North Webster; and Jim Morris of Indianapolis.

Please join me in welcoming our Trustees.

I also want to welcome a number of elected officials or their representatives who are with us today. I also ask them to stand as I introduce them, and again I ask that you hold your applause until all are introduced. With us are:

- Representative Terri Austin, who represents District 36 in the Indiana House of Representatives,
- Representative Shelia Klinker, who represents District 27 in the Indiana House,
- Bloomington Mayor John Hamilton,

and

- Monica Kozlowski, from the office of United States Senator, Dan Coates.

As well, I am very pleased to welcome Sidney Eskenazi, who is a dedicated supporter of a number of Indiana University schools and programs. Last month, we renamed the IU Art Museum the Sidney and Lois Eskenazi Museum of Art in honor of the extraordinary generosity of Sidney and his wife, Lois. Their philanthropy, of course, also made possible the establishment of the Sidney and Lois Eskenazi Hospital and Eskenazi Health here in Indianapolis.

Would you join me in welcoming Sidney Eskenazi?

We are also joined this morning by a number of senior leaders of Indiana University, including IUPUI Chancellor Nasser Paydar and IU Bloomington Provost Lauren Robel. Would you join me in welcoming them and all of the current and former IU senior leaders who are here today?

2. INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH TO ADDRESS HUMANITY'S MAJOR PROBLEMS

This morning's event emphatically underscores Indiana University's standing as a national leader in research and as the home of internationally recognized scholars whose research and scholarship benefit the people of Indiana in countless ways.

For nearly 200 years, Indiana University has fueled an engine of prosperity for Indiana and the nation, led the state's international engagement, sparked discoveries that have helped solve large-scale problems, and illuminated the boundless possibilities of human imagination and creativity.

Public research universities, like Indiana University, also play a major role in regional and national economic development. They have become primary sources of American research, discovery, and innovation. Indiana University and the nation's other leading research universities produce research that improves our health, grows our economy, and enhances our day-to-day lives in profound ways.

Leading research universities are also well-positioned to have major impacts on society's most critical challenges—challenges whose solutions require expertise drawn from across a full range of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. University research has become increasingly interdisciplinary and more and more of it is based on teams of investigators focused on these major and large-scale problems—often called “grand challenges.” These challenges are daunting. Consider the challenges of environmental degradation and restoration; climate change; renewable energy; the security of the Internet—now essential to commerce; the supply of safe foods and fresh water, cures for diseases and infections such as cancer, malaria, AIDS, and Ebola; and the threat of global pandemics.

America's colleges and universities, particularly its leading research universities, working in partnership with industry, government, and community organizations, will provide the people, ideas, and discoveries that will help us to meet and overcome these challenges.

The Grand Challenges Research Program is a major part of Indiana University's commitment to doing just that.

As we approach Indiana University's Bicentennial, the program reflects IU's commitment to redoubling its efforts to find and implement solutions for the most pressing issues of our time—solutions that will improve the quality of life for the citizens of the state of Indiana who have helped support IU for nearly 200 years.

3. ANNOUNCING THE INAUGURAL GRAND CHALLENGES PROJECT

As Vice President Cate said earlier, we expect that as many as four more projects will be funded under the Grand Challenges Program between now and Indiana University's Bicentennial in 2020.

This morning, I am delighted to announce the proposal that has been selected for funding in this, the program's inaugural year.

After thorough evaluation of 21 excellent preliminary proposals—five of which were selected as finalists and were developed into full proposals—the Precision Health Initiative has been selected as the recipient of the first round of funding in Indiana University's Grand Challenges Research Program.

(Pause.)

Proposed by a team from the Indiana University School of Medicine, along with its partner IU schools and external corporate partners, and led by Principal Investigator Dr. Anantha Shekhar, the Precision Health Initiative focuses on an approach that is expected to transform biomedical research and the delivery of healthcare in the future.

Precision medicine, as you will hear from Dr. Shekhar in a moment, is a groundbreaking approach to disease prevention and treatment that takes into account patients' individual differences in environment, genes, and lifestyle.

The Precision Health Initiative will position IU among the leading universities in the nation in this emerging field and will have a transformative effect on the health, well-being, and economy of Indiana.

A major element of the implementation of the Precision Health Initiative will be the recruitment of new faculty members who will lead initiatives to expand research programs and whose expertise will be pivotal to the initiative's success. It is anticipated that around 40 new faculty members will be hired. These will include 22 in the IU School of Medicine in fields as varied as cancer genomics, neurogenetics, cell-based therapies, and bioethics; nine in the College of Arts and Sciences at IU Bloomington in fields ranging from mass spectrometry and chemical immunology to network demography; five in the School of Informatics and Computing in areas such as health informatics, big data high performance computing and agent-oriented machine learning; and additional faculty members in the Fairbanks School of Public Health, the IU School of Nursing, and the Kelley School of Business.

Indiana University will be investing over \$100 million in the Precision Health Initiative—\$80 million from the IU School of Medicine and up to an additional \$40 million in funding through the Grand Challenges Program.

On behalf of Indiana University, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Shekhar and all of the members of his team, as well as all of the other finalists and all of the faculty members across the university who submitted proposals during the program's inaugural year. I also want to once again extend our most sincere thanks to the members of the faculty review committee who thoughtfully reviewed the proposals and to all those who joined with Indiana University as partners and advisors as members of the Grand Challenges External Advisory Board.

Now, I invite you to watch this brief video featuring Dr. Shekhar that highlights the mission of the Precision Health Initiative and the major potential it holds for improving the health of citizens of the state of Indiana and beyond.

4. INTRODUCING ANANTHA SHEKHAR

Now, it is my pleasure to introduce to introduce the Principal Investigator of the Precision Health Initiative.

Dr. Anantha Shekhar is a nationally recognized researcher who serves as Executive Associate Dean for Research Affairs in the IU School of Medicine.

He has also served, since 2008, as the founding director of the Indiana Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute, a statewide collaboration that includes Purdue University, the University of Notre Dame, and a number of life sciences businesses and community organizations. The Indiana CTSI works to speed the transformation of scientific discoveries in the laboratory into new therapies for patients and new businesses for Indiana.

Dr. Shekhar is also the co-founder of the startup company, Anagin, which was launched in 2013, and which received a major research grant from the National Institutes of Health. Anagin is developing drugs that will more effectively treat Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. A nationally recognized expert in translational medicine, Dr. Shekhar is a member of the Advisory Board for Clinical Research for the NIH Director, and a tenured member of the Advisory Council for the NIH's National Center for Advancing Translational Science. Closer to home, he is chair of the Indiana Governor's Committee on Mental Health Workforce Development. And now, on top of all of that, he will be leading IU's first Grand Challenge project, the Precision Health Initiative!

To tell us more about the Precision Health Initiative, please join me in welcoming Dr. Anantha Shekhar.