

“United in Common Purpose: Breaking Ground on a Partnership for Excellence”

IU Northwest Arts and Sciences Building Groundbreaking

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President, Indiana University

Lobby of Savannah Center

IU Northwest

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1. INTRODUCTION

Renowned architect and dean of the Yale School of Architecture, Robert A. M. Stern, once wrote that “American campuses ...are among the greatest dream places of our civilization... Given America’s cultural diversity,” Stern continued, “the campus and the rituals that it supports... provide an essential sense of community, uniting people in a common purpose.”¹

Today, we break ground for a facility that will greatly enhance the essential sense of community here in Gary, and one that will unite the students, faculty, and staff of two institutions in a common purpose.

2. THE REGIONAL CAMPUSES: AN INTEGRAL PART OF IU’S MISSION

For more than four decades, the regional campuses of Indiana University have made vital contributions to their regions and the state of Indiana. Today, they enroll about one-third of all IU students. They provide an excellent education to more than 35,000

¹ Robert A. M. Stern, *Pride of Place: Building the American Dream* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986), 41.

students a year, the vast majority of whom are Hoosiers, and many of whom are non-traditional or first-generation students.

Our regional campuses also serve as invaluable economic and community development catalysts in their regions, and they play a major role in helping the state achieve its goal of substantially increasing the number of Indiana residents with college degrees.

Nowhere is this impact more greatly felt than here in Gary and northwest Indiana.

Nearly three-quarters of IU Northwest graduates stay in the area, using their new skills and knowledge to contribute—along with current students, faculty, and staff—in countless ways, large and small, to the civic, economic, and cultural life of this region and the state.

3. TAMARACK HALL

But, as most of you know very well, the IU Northwest community was met with difficult circumstances in September of 2008, when the campus sustained extensive flood damage. Classes were cancelled for two weeks, and the administration, faculty, and staff worked tirelessly over the course of several weeks to restore normal operations.

A thorough assessment revealed that Tamarack Hall—the campus's oldest building—had suffered such extensive flood damage that would have been closed and, ultimately, demolished.

Indiana University made the building's replacement a priority in our next capital appropriation request. However, September 2008, as I'm sure many of you will remember only too well, was also the month when the Dow Jones Industrial Average experienced the largest one-day point drop in its history. Although we did not know at

the time how long it would last, it soon became abundantly clear that the Great Recession was upon us.

The recession had an enormous impact on universities and colleges—as well as on state governments—all across the country. While Indiana weathered the recession far better than many states, plans for a new building at IU Northwest—as well as plans for a separate new facility for Ivy Tech Northwest—had to be put on hold.

By 2012, a plan had been proposed for a facility to be shared by IU Northwest and the Northwest campus of Ivy Tech in a special arrangement intended to encourage Ivy Tech students to finish their bachelor's degrees here at IU Northwest.

4. A LONG, RICH HISTORY OF COLLABORATION

Of course, IU and Ivy Tech Community College share a long and rich history of collaboration dating back many years. In recent years, we have worked together to make it easier for students to transfer credits between our campuses and have established formal articulation agreements across the state to help Ivy Tech graduates earn a four-year degree from Indiana University.

The Arts and Sciences Building will strengthen that long and successful record of cooperation and extend it well into the future.

I should also note that the splendid Shadows and Echoes Sculpture Garden in the courtyard of the building in which we are gathered today reminds us that cultural discovery is an important part of learning.

Indiana University has long been deeply committed to the arts, not only because they are a vital part of a well-rounded education, but also because the university has long

recognized that the quality of our culture and the quality of the arts are deeply and closely interconnected.

And so, I am delighted that the Arts and Sciences Building will be the new home for IU Northwest's fine and performing arts programs, and that these programs will be housed right alongside instruction in the sciences and other disciplines in what will be a splendid new facility.

5. SPECIAL THANKS

That we are breaking ground on this long-awaited and much-needed facility today is testimony to the dedication of many groups and individuals.

We are especially grateful for the support that the Indiana General Assembly has given us over the years. I want to express, on behalf of Indiana University, our deepest thanks to our state legislators—particularly the Lake County delegation—and the members of the State Budget Committee and the Commission for Higher Education for their loyal support of Indiana University and their effective support for higher education.

I also want to thank and commend our colleagues at Ivy Tech Community College, including Ivy Tech President Thomas Snyder and Ivy Tech Northwest Chancellor Thomas Coley, who are both here today and from whom we will hear in a few moments. All of us at Indiana University look forward to continuing to work together closely with them and their colleagues around the state to expand and strengthen the partnership between our institutions.

I also want to commend former chancellor Bruce Bergland, who led the campus's efforts to recover from the devastating 2008 flood, and current chancellor, Bill Lowe, who has been a tireless advocate for this new facility. IU Northwest has benefitted enormously

from the excellent leadership of both Chancellor Emeritus Bergland and Chancellor Lowe.

And, finally and more generally, I would like to thank our Trustees for their steadfast and enthusiastic support—not only for this building—but also for their continued and ongoing efforts to guard and care for the welfare of our institution.

6. CONCLUSION

Architect Robert A. M. Stern, whom I quoted earlier, and who, incidentally, designed one of the buildings on our Indianapolis campus, has also written that “Academic institutions define their own educational missions, and buildings give them shape. But,” he continues, “campus buildings also have an obligation to context: each has to take its place in the ensemble, each must reflect the historic roots of learning and creativity, while embodying the evolving ideals of the academic community.”²

All of us look forward with great anticipation to the day when the Arts and Sciences Building takes its place in the ensemble, and we look forward to witnessing the many ways the building will embody the evolving ideals of IU Northwest and the northwest campus of Ivy Tech.

Thank you very much.

² Robert A.M. Stern, *Robert A.M. Stern: On Campus: Architecture, Identity, and Community*, (Monacelli Press, 2010), 9.