“Celebrating the Transformative Generosity of Cindy Simon Skjodt”

Announcement of the Renovation and Renaming of Assembly Hall

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie
Assembly Hall
Thursday, December 19, 2013
2:30 p.m.

1. ANNOUNCING A LANDMARK GIFT TO IU ATHLETICS

Thank you, Fred (Glass).

And thank you all for joining us for what is—it’s no exaggeration to say—a truly momentous occasion for Indiana University, and an historic milestone for IU Athletics and one our most iconic facilities.

I am delighted to announce this afternoon that philanthropist and IU alumna Cindy Simon Skjodt and her philanthropic organization, the Samerian Foundation, have made an extraordinarily generous gift of $40 million—the largest gift in the history of IU Athletics—which will be used for a much-needed extensive renovation of Assembly Hall.

We expect this renovation to be completed as early as 2016.

I am also very pleased to announce that in honor of this landmark gift, when these renovations are complete, Assembly Hall will be renamed Simon Skjodt Assembly Hall.

2. A LEGACY OF GENEROSITY: CINDY SIMON SKJODT AND THE SIMON FAMILY

Cindy and her family have, of course, been extraordinarily generous supporters of Indiana University for many, many years.

We announced just two weeks ago that Cindy had generously donated $2 million to endow a chair in the Herron School of Art and Design's Art Therapy Program. That gift provides the resources the program will need to become one of the finest of its kind in the nation.

Cindy also recently made a generous gift of $1.5 million to endow the Melvin Simon Chair in Philanthropy in the new IU Lilly Family School of Philanthropy on the IUPUI campus in honor of her late father, Melvin Simon.

Of course, the Simon family name has long been synonymous with transformative philanthropy in the state of Indiana and across the nation, and it will forever be interwoven with the great achievements of Indiana University. Their vision and support of our students through the Hillel Center, their support of the arts through IU's world class Jacobs School of Music, their support of multidisciplinary life sciences and other research through the award-winning Simon Hall on the Bloomington campus, and their extraordinarily generous support that made possible the creation of the nationally-recognized Melvin and Bren Simon Cancer Center in Indianapolis have had a tremendous and transformative effect on this university.

Cindy's extraordinarily generous gift of $40 million is not only the largest gift ever made by an individual in the history of IU Athletics, it is also the fourth largest such gift in the history of Indiana University. And when you consider the fact that the second largest gift in IU's history was from her father, you begin to get a sense of the enormous impact the Simon family has had at Indiana University.

Cindy, of course, has also been tremendously generous with her time and her service to IU.

She is a member of the IU Foundation Board of Directors and the Women's Philanthropy Council.

She served as one of the co-chairs of the successful Matching the Promise campaign, which raised $1.14 billion for the Bloomington campus.

And she now serves as the co-chair of the newly launched $150 million IU Athletics Catching Excellence Campaign, which Fred described a moment ago.

This generous gift—and Cindy's outstanding leadership—will undoubtedly inspire many others to join the effort to preserve and improve one of the great venues in college athletics for the next generation of Hoosier basketball fans.

I know that this gift has a deep personal meaning for Cindy, as she and her late father, Mel Simon attended many basketball games here—games of which, she has told me, she has only the fondest memories.

On behalf of Indiana University, I would like to extend our deepest gratitude to Cindy, to her husband Paul, the owner of the Indiana Ice, who is also with us today, and to their entire family.

Your generosity will touch the lives of countless student-athletes, coaches, alumni, and friends of IU, and it will help IU's men's and women's basketball programs to continue to thrive for many decades to come.

3. INTRODUCING CINDY SIMON SKJODT

And now, it is my great pleasure to introduce the woman whose generosity and vision we celebrate today.

Would you all please join me in welcoming Cindy Simon Skjodt.