

“Improving Health and Well-Being in North Central Indiana:  
The Milt and Jean Cole Family Wellness and Fitness Center at IU Kokomo”

Dedication of the Milt and Jean Cole Family Wellness and Fitness Center

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President

Indiana University

Kresge Auditorium

IU Kokomo Library

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11:30 a.m.

## 1. INTRODUCTION: REDUCING RISKS TO HEALTH

Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, then director-general of the World Health Organization, wrote in the 2002 World Health Report that “reducing risks to health ...has been a preoccupation of people and their physicians and politicians throughout history. It can be traced back at least 5,000 years to some of the world’s earliest civilizations. But it has never been more relevant than it is today.”<sup>1</sup>

More than a decade later, the health risks associated with wealthy societies as described in that comprehensive report—such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol, tobacco and excessive alcohol consumption, obesity, and physical inactivity—have become of even greater concern in the United States, the state of Indiana, and across Indiana University, and initiatives and policies to address them continue to grow.

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<sup>1</sup> The World Health Report 2002: Reducing Risks, Promoting Healthy Life, (World Health Organization, 2002), 3.

Today, we dedicate the Milt and Jean Cole Family Wellness and Fitness Center as yet a further initiative at Indiana University to help address these risks to individual health and the declining measures of public health in our state. The center will enable faculty, students, and staff to take more responsibility for their physical well-being, thus helping to moderate the cost of healthcare, and, more generally, it will help improve the well-being of the IU Kokomo community. Moreover, this center is indicative of IU's commitment to build and improve facilities dedicated to fitness and wellness on all of IU's campuses, and hence help address the serious public health challenges facing the state.

## 2. THE CRITICAL NEED FOR IMPROVED HEALTH IN INDIANA

Unfortunately, the most recent studies show that Indiana continues to rank poorly among all states in measures of the leading causes of illness and death as well as measures of the determinants of health.

Indiana has the 7th highest smoking rate in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> The percentage of adults who have had a heart attack and the percentage of adults with high cholesterol are the 6th and 17th highest in the country, respectively.<sup>3</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ranks Indiana as the 8th most obese state—up from 11th five years ago.<sup>4</sup> Indiana is also one of the least funded states in terms of federal public health funding.

These very poor measures have a human cost in lives cut short and families devastated by loss. They also have an economic cost in lost productivity and spiraling health care costs. In fact, employers also are increasingly looking at public health measures in states when considering where to locate. A healthier community means lower health care costs for both employers and employees.

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<sup>2</sup> "The State of Public Health in Indiana," 2013 Public Health Action Campaign Fact Sheet, American Public Health Association, available online at <http://www.apha.org/NR/rdonlyres/A7B64222-27C9-47F0-8275-1CE147255A3E/0/Indiana2013PHACTCampaignSheet.pdf>, retrieved, September 16, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> J. K. Wall, "Indiana Public Health Continues Slide," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, August 19, 2013.

The continuing declines we see in many of these public health measures lend a sense of urgency to our efforts to address the underlying problems.

### 3. ADDRESSING PUBLIC HEALTH AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Indiana University has launched a major effort to address these problems that face the state and nation through the establishment of two new schools of public health. About a year ago, we inaugurated the Fairbanks School of Public Health on the IUPUI campus, and the School of Public Health at IU Bloomington.

These two new schools have as their central missions the improvement of public health by conducting research of the highest quality and by educating the next generation of public health professionals.

They are also contributing to the state's economic development through the promotion of a healthier workforce and the containment of rapidly increasing employer health care costs. We now spend over \$200 million a year on health care as a university. To put this in perspective, this is more than five times the total budget of IU Kokomo!

### 4. THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF IU'S REGIONAL CAMPUSES

Many of IU's regional campuses, of course, have programs in similar areas to these schools, including the Division of Allied Health Sciences here at IU Kokomo. And it is the invaluable contributions like these that campuses like IU Kokomo make to their regions that underscores again the great and continuing importance of IU's regional campuses to the State of Indiana.

They are invaluable community resources that serve a broad spectrum of students, and they are increasingly a first choice for some of the best and brightest high school students in Indiana, as can be seen in the large gains in the number of students earning Indiana Academic Honors degrees from their high schools and those being named 21st Century Scholars by the state.

Over the past several years, our Trustees have taken a number of steps to strengthen the breadth and rigor of the academic quality of our regional campuses. We have added degree programs across the state focusing on the needs of the regions the campuses serve, and we have taken strong steps through our Blueprint for Student Attainment initiative—led so ably by Executive Vice President for University Academic Affairs, John Applegate—to further integrate the regional campuses more broadly into Indiana University.

The regional campuses collectively enroll about one-third of all IU students. They provide an outstanding education to 40,000 students a year, most of them Hoosiers. Many of them are also first generation and non-traditional students. Our regional campuses, all of which have seen their enrollments increase to record levels in recent years, also serve as invaluable economic and community development catalysts in their regions and are playing a key role in helping the state achieve its goal of dramatically increasing the number of Indiana residents with college degrees.

The members of IU's regional campus communities should take great pride in the service they provide to our students and their communities. Likewise, your success is a great source of pride for all of us at Indiana University.

The history of IU's regional campuses is a history of leadership and partnership across the university and across the state. Countless faculty, administrators, staff, and students transformed this campus into what it is today. They helped build an intellectual community that is a vital part of this civic community.

Kokomo is a city that has always believed in the power of education. IU's teaching presence in Kokomo dates back to 1920 when a visiting professor from IU Bloomington travelled to Kokomo to teach classes through IU's Extension Division. This division—and IU's extension centers—ultimately became the regional campuses we know today.

## 5. SPECIAL THANKS

Of course, we are here today because of the generosity of a family whose members share the belief that this campus and the members of the community that comprise it should be nurtured and sustained.

On behalf of Indiana University, I would like to express how deeply grateful we are to Milt and Jean Cole—as well all of the members of the Cole family who are here today—for their extraordinary generosity.

The family's gift of \$1.25 million for the construction of this center is the largest cash gift ever received on the Kokomo campus.

Their generosity is testament to the true strength of this great institution. It will leave an indelible mark on the Kokomo campus, and it will touch the lives of countless students, faculty, and staff for many years to come.

I also want to commend Interim Chancellor Sciame-Giesecke for her tireless advocacy of this project and, more generally, for her leadership of IU Kokomo during this time of transition. We greatly appreciate her service.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The late Joan Whaley Gallup, an architect who consulted with major healthcare institutions on the design and programming of healthcare facilities and wellness centers, wrote that “on a global level, it is vital for every community to make the health of citizens the number one priority. Healthier people,” she wrote, “will have a better quality of life, will be able to contribute positively to the arts, to culture, to science, and will be empowered as a more productive work force.”<sup>5</sup>

Ultimately, the Milt and Jean Cole Family Wellness and Fitness Center will do just that.

As we dedicate this striking and impressive center, we demonstrate our commitment to the health of the members of the IU Kokomo community. May all who use it realize improved health, a better quality of life, and may it allow you all to contribute ever more positively and productively to the vibrant academic and cultural life of Indiana University Kokomo.

Thank you very much.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., viii.