

“Profiting by the Past: Celebrating the Renovations of Jordan and Owen Halls”

Dedication of Renovations to Owen Hall and Jordan Hall

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President, Indiana University

Presidents Hall

Friday, February 21, 2014

3:30 p.m.

1. INTRODUCTION

Charles Klauder, an architect who designed many university buildings around the country, including the magnificent and iconic Cathedral of Learning at the University of Pittsburgh, once wrote that colleges and universities are particularly well suited to reap the benefits of forethought and skill in planning.

“Nowhere is it more essential,” he wrote, “to have the physical plant beautiful and well-knit together; nowhere should it be more feasible to enlist the careful thought of well-trained minds, to weigh and reconcile all component parts, to profit by the past, to measure accurately the present, to forecast the future as well as it can be forecast...”¹

Today, as we celebrate the splendid renovations of Owen Hall and Jordan Hall, we note that Indiana University truly has “enlisted the careful thought of well-trained minds” in order to profit by the past, to measure accurately the present, and to forecast—and make provisions for—the future.

¹ Charles Z. Klauder and Charles C. Wise, *College Architecture and its Part in the Development of the Campus*, (C. Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 23.

2. ENLISTING THE CAREFUL THOUGHT OF WELL-TRAINED MINDS

Some years ago, over a period of many months, faculty, students, staff, administrators, and local community leaders—many of whom are here today—gave extensive input to the Master Plan for IU Bloomington, which was completed and approved by our Board of Trustees in 2010. During the planning process, considerable effort was made to maximize collaboration and inclusiveness. The resulting Master Plan was—and is—a superb blueprint for the future development of this campus.

As most of you know, one important conclusion that was drawn from the Master Plan was that the way we were using the magnificent iconic buildings that comprise the Old Crescent—the historic core of the campus—did not properly reflect the university’s core missions of education and research. Over a period of several decades, buildings in this historic part of the campus that were built to house libraries, laboratories, classrooms, and study halls were converted for use by administrative units.

Thus, in my February 2010 State of the University address, I asked the then-provost and the vice president for capital planning and facilities to jointly convene the Old Crescent Academic Working Group to develop a long-term plan for the return of the iconic buildings in the Old Crescent to academic purposes, with the assumption that this space would be reallocated primarily to units within the College of Arts and Sciences.

3. PROFITING BY THE PAST—A HUB OF ACADEMIC LIFE FOR THE FUTURE

Of course, all of these buildings are of enormous historical importance to IU. They are a core part of the university’s heritage and it is essential that we make the best possible use of them. We are now well on our way toward revitalizing the Old Crescent as a vibrant hub of student and academic life and activity.

The space in which we are currently gathered—which was, for many years, the Grand Reading Room of the IU Library—was the first space in the Old Crescent to undergo

renovation. Of course, a full renovation of Franklin Hall is to follow, and the building will soon provide essential space and resources for the combined programs of the new IU Media School. And once again, on behalf of the entire university, I want to express our deep gratitude to the members of the Indiana Legislature for their allocation last year of \$21 million for restoration and improvements of Franklin Hall.

In the last year, we have also celebrated a renovation in the Student Building which resulted in the creation of a truly superb state-of-the-art collaborative learning center, as well as a complete renovation of historic Alumni Hall in the Indiana Memorial Union.

4. OWEN HALL: AN HISTORIC HOME FOR IU'S OLDEST ACADEMIC DIVISION

The renovation of Owen Hall, which we dedicate today, was one of the key recommendations of the Old Crescent Academic Working Group.

The renovation of the building, which was largely vacant, provides the administrative offices of the College of Arts and Sciences with office space that keeps the deans and administrators at the center of many of the academic departments and programs of the College.

And it is quite fitting that one of our two oldest buildings is now home to the offices of IU's oldest and largest academic division.

Renovations of Kirkwood Hall, the former home of the College's administrative offices, will begin in the near future, and, in keeping with the working group's recommendation, Kirkwood Hall will once again become, in totality, a vibrant and active academic classroom building.

5. BIOLOGY AND JORDAN HALL: A LEGACY OF OUTSTANDING RESEARCH AND TEACHING

Jordan Hall, home to the Department of Biology, is, of course, not part of the Old Crescent, but it is very much a part of what we consider to be the historic core of the campus.

As historian Thomas Clarke wrote, “when the impressive hall of biological sciences was dedicated on June 8, 1956, it was said to be one of the most modern scientific buildings on an American campus.”²

Clarke noted, too, that some of Indiana University’s ablest scientists—including Nobel Prize winner Herman J. Muller, Tracy Sonneborn, and Alfred Kinsey—were ready to move into the offices and laboratories of the newly-built Jordan Hall.³

There is no question that Jordan Hall has been the site of great discoveries over its life span. But any scientific facility must be up to modern standards, and even the best-outfitted laboratories must be continually updated.

And so, today, we celebrate the complete renovation of a number of state-of-the-art teaching and research labs, as well as a new greenhouse system and other enhancements to Jordan Hall that will enable the Department of Biology to continue its legacy of outstanding research and teaching, a legacy associated with four Nobel Prize winners.

With the enormous advances we have seen in biology, genetics, and biomedical research in the last decade, and with the increasingly fruitful collaboration of biologists with researchers from other disciplines, the outstanding work done in IU’s Department of Biology will continue to propel advances in fundamental understanding throughout the life sciences during the 21st century. The renovated facility we dedicate today will help to foster those advances.

² Thomas D. Clark, *Indiana University: Midwestern Pioneer, Volume 3, Years of Fulfillment*, (Indiana University Press, 1977), 187.

³ Ibid.

6. SPECIAL THANKS

Of course, all projects like the ones we dedicate today require a great team that collaborates on the many details that ultimately come together.

Though they have since all graduated, we are grateful for the work of the 2010 members of the Board of Aeons, who prepared an outstanding report, “Revitalizing the Old Quadrangle,” which helped to inform the work of the Old Crescent Academic Working Group. They are represented here today by most of the current members of the Board of Aeons.

I also want to commend Provost Lauren Robel, from whom you will hear in a moment, for her numerous contributions to the planning and implementation of the projects we are celebrating this afternoon.

I also commend Larry Singell, Executive Dean of the College; the associate deans of the college; and all of the College staff and faculty whose contributions were integral to these renovations.

I also want to commend Vice President for Capital Planning and Facilities Tom Morrison—from whom you will also hear shortly—as well as the many design and construction professionals, both internal and external, who contributed to these projects.

And, finally and more generally, I would like to thank our Trustees for their steadfast and enthusiastic support for these renovations as well as their continued and ongoing efforts to guard and care for the welfare of our institution.

7. CONCLUSION

Architect Charles Klauder, to whom I referred earlier, called the type of planning for which universities are particularly well-suited an “art,” but, in his words, “it is also a science.”⁴

Today, thanks to so many of you who have been involved in the processes that have allowed IU to profit by the past and to look to the future, we celebrate the latest benefits the “art and science” of planning has brought to IU’s outstanding College of Arts and Sciences.

We look forward to celebrating the many achievements and advances that are yet to come.

⁴ Charles Z. Klauder and Charles C. Wise, *College Architecture and its Part in the Development of the Campus*, (C. Scribner’s Sons, 1929), p. 23.