

“Building a Scholarly Community”

Honors Convocation

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President

Indiana University

IU Auditorium

Sunday, April 10, 2011

2:00 p.m.

1. “RESPONSE, GROWTH, TRANSFORMATION, INSPIRATION”

In his autobiography, *Being Lucky*, IU’s legendary 11th president Herman B Wells wrote of his time as a student at Indiana University that “[f]or me it was an efflorescent period when my mind was open to receive a myriad of new ideas. . . . Music, literature, and art—my whole being responded to the stimuli of collegiate life, in and out of the classroom. It was for me a time of response, growth, transformation, and inspiration.”¹

Today, as we recognize Indiana University’s Founders Scholars, we know that time of response, growth, transformation, and inspiration, for all of you, is right now.

2. A LIBERAL EDUCATION FOR A CHANGING WORLD

This is a time to learn the language of logic and reason that has grown over centuries and opens the doors of scientific discovery. It is a time to develop skills of discernment that will help you understand and appreciate the great beauty of art and literature from many different cultures. It is a time to range widely among your fields of interest so that

¹ *Being Lucky: Reminiscences and Reflections*. Bloomington: IU Press, 1980. Page 42.

you can achieve an education of the depth and breadth that our changing world requires.

This is a world vastly different from the one in which your parents grew up and one that your great grand parents likely would not recognize. This is a world where you can expect to change careers multiple times during your lifetime.² This is a world in which you can blog, tweet, and text from nearly anywhere. In fact, some of you are probably texting right now.

As the finest students at one of America's greatest universities, you are preparing for this world of change, and that preparation includes the strong foundation of a liberal education, called liberal not because it has a particular political affinity but because it is wide-ranging and opens you to possibilities that you may never have otherwise imagined.

Such an education fosters wisdom, respect, and humility, which grows when we begin to measure ourselves against the most accomplished of our ancestors about whom we have learned.

It will enable you to remain flexible and creative, open to unexpected directions of thought and action. It will enable you to work collaboratively with people from diverse backgrounds, responding with speed and knowledge to changing circumstances. It will enable you to think analytically, synthesizing information from many different areas to generate solutions to unforeseen and challenging problems.

² See, for instance, United States. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Number of Jobs Held, Labor Market Activity, and Earnings Growth among the Youngest Baby Boomers: Results from a Longitudinal Survey." Press Release. 25 Aug. 2006. USDL 06-1496.

3. LEADERS OF TOMORROW

As leaders of tomorrow, you bear the weighty burden of responsibility, and you face a world that is changing even as we gather here together. This spring alone, we have followed the sometimes earth-shattering and certainly world-changing news from places like Japan, Libya, and Egypt. These are places to which some of you have travelled during the course of your studies, and these are places to which some of you will return as you take on the challenges of the future.

Those challenges demand the education of depth and breadth that you are receiving here at Indiana University. Your presence here today demonstrates the dedication, passion, and hard work you have put in to achieving that education.

4. A COMMUNITY ALIVE WITH OPPORTUNITY

Indiana University, steeped in traditions of excellence, is the perfect place for that education. Over the course of nearly two centuries, the intellectual community that has been forged here has drawn scholars from around the world who have joined our outstanding faculty, and it has drawn students, like you, who enrich the academic culture and raise the standard for all students, both inside and outside of the classroom. This is a community alive with opportunity for learning.

If we consider just this past week:

On Monday the Hutton Honors College hosted a forum on Burmese immigration.

On Tuesday, the Joffrey Ballet performed at the IU Auditorium.

On Wednesday, we welcomed Graeme Dinwoodie of Oxford University, who delivered a public lecture on trademark law.

On Thursday, Australian Ambassador to the U.S. Kim Beazley delivered a lecture at the Lilly Library, one of the foremost experts on Frank Lloyd Wright gave a public lecture, and the IU Cinema presented the 25th anniversary showing of *Hoosiers*.

On Friday, the world premiere of the opera *Vincent* appeared at the Musical Arts Center, the 22nd opera to have its world premiere at IU and the 895th musical program at IU this season.

Yesterday, IU hosted the World Language Festival, Indiana's largest event dedicated to language and cultural study.

And today, we are here this afternoon to celebrate you, Indiana University Bloomington's finest students.

6. A SNAPSHOT OF FOUNDERS SCHOLARS

As this university's best, your ambitions match your achievements, encouraging you to think on a broader scale. You have founded IU's chapter of the Global Medical Brigades Program, you are leaders in the Board of Aeons, and you are Justices on the Student Body Supreme Court.

You are LAMP Scholars, Morley Scholars, Wells Scholars, Stahr Scholars, Cox Scholars, Metz Scholars, Hudson Holland Scholars, Hutton Scholars.

You have studied in Spain, Honduras, Japan, Korea, Peru, and so many other places, taking Indiana University with you and bringing the world back here to Bloomington.

And these are just snapshots of the vast and varied scholarly community that you, our Founders Scholars, are helping to build here at Indiana University.

7. "A GLITTERING, SWIRLING ATMOSPHERE OF IDEAS"

This university is your intellectual home. It is a community rich in culture and deeply engaged in a collective search for knowledge. By virtue of your diligence, intelligence, and achievement, you have become a part of that collective search.

You have also become a part of what Dr. Wells described as "the glittering, swirling atmosphere of ideas" that is Indiana University.³

Congratulations on all that you have achieved.

³ Wells, op. cit.