

“Building on Strength at the
Purdue School of Engineering and Technology”

Purdue School of Engineering and Technology Faculty and Staff Convocation

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President

Indiana University

ICTC Auditorium

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis Campus

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9:30 a.m.

1. INTRODUCTION: WORKING SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

Thank you for that introduction, Dean Yurtseven. It is my great pleasure to be here this morning and to see so many familiar faces.

In his inaugural address, President Lyndon Johnson advised, “By working shoulder to shoulder, together we can increase the bounty of all. We have discovered that every child who learns, every man [and woman] who finds work, every sick body that is made whole— like a candle added to an altar— brightens the hope of all . . .” (January 20, 1965)

This advice has characterized my time at Indiana University. As you know, I arrived at IU in 1997. From the beginning, my goal has been to create productive collaborations throughout the university and throughout the state. This goal has only been strengthened since I was named the university’s 18th president.

2. LISTENING AND LEARNING

Before I officially took office, I had visited all of IU's campuses. I had spoken to hundreds if not thousands of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends at events around the state. I had conducted dozens of media interviews. I had had conversations with business and government leaders statewide.

This exercise in listening and learning has continued since I took office on July 1st. It remains key to building collaborative relationships that will help the citizens of the entire state reap the rewards produced by a strong system of higher education.

3. LONGSTANDING PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN IU AND PURDUE

Our system of higher education is strengthened tremendously by the longstanding partnership between Indiana University and Purdue University. We may compete on the athletic fields, but when it comes to providing educational opportunities to Hoosiers, we must continue to join hands and work together. We must remain committed to the outcome of our efforts— educated citizens— and the impact they will have on this state.

The Purdue School of Engineering and Technology here at IUPUI is one of the best examples of that collaboration. Your faculty exemplify the strength that partnerships create. Chancellor's Professor and Chair of the Department of Mechanical Engineering Hasan Akay offers just one example. For the last few years he has skillfully guided the IUPUI Faculty Council Technology Committee that works to ensure that the IT needs of the campus faculty are met through University Information Technology Services. During the last two years, Dr. Akay has played a very central role in developing information technology policies that guide the entire university. Dr. Akay is just one of many examples I could draw on.

My own faculty position in your school is added testimony to the continuing strong relationship I envision between Indiana University and Purdue University. In many ways, this school is at the center of the university's key priorities.

Let me take a moment to sketch out a few of these.

4.1 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: INDIANA LIFE SCIENCES INITIATIVE

The Indiana Life Sciences Initiative will continue to be one of our key priorities. This bold initiative aims to capitalize on IU faculty expertise to make the state of Indiana a national leader in life sciences industries. Although this is an ambitious goal, it is not an abstract one. It is a goal that can be measured in lives improved and lives saved.

Your own Biomedical Engineering program speaks to the interdisciplinary nature of this initiative. Working collaboratively with neuroscientists, toxicologists, and researchers from many other disciplines, your faculty pave the way toward a healthier future. This kind of interdisciplinary research will take us a great distance into the future.

The director of the National Science Foundation Arden Bement recently emphasized, "More and more, fundamental research at the interface among disciplines is proving to be the most fertile territory for discovery. Interdisciplinary research and collaboration are becoming the norm, rather than the exception, in many research endeavors." ¹

You are working in that fertile territory with exceptional results.

¹ Remarks presented by Bement at the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) Board Meeting^{SEP} on June 4, 2007.

4.2 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Our life sciences initiative is just one way that we plan to contribute to economic development throughout the state. Innovation is an engine that can drive a state toward economic growth, and IUPUI is a center for innovation.

We have tremendous opportunities throughout the state to fully engage in regional economies. Our new vice president for economic development Bill Stephan will help us capitalize on those opportunities. We will transform intellectual property generated by outstanding scientists and researchers like you into products, services, and companies that promise to improve Hoosier lives.

Your own Dean's Industrial Advisory Council shows the productive power of partnerships between the university and area industry. This group of over 45 local, regional, and national business leaders connect the Purdue School of Engineering and Technology to a world of opportunities for students and faculty members alike. This kind of civic collaboration helps the university remain aware of and responsive to area economic and workforce needs.

The same can be said of the many innovative research projects that Engineering and Technology faculty are conducting in partnership with local businesses. Whether it is Ed Berbari's studies of ECG devices with Medtronic, Razi Nalim's work with Rolls-Royce and Cummins, Yaobin Chen's work with digital TV and other applications, or Andrew Hsu's contributions to the Transportation Active Safety Institute and the Lugar Center for Renewable Energy, the dedicated and first-rate faculty in the School of Engineering and Technology offer a model for other schools interested in responding to civic and industrial needs.

4.3 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: INTERNATIONALIZATION

Economic development is both a local and a global issue. I probably do not need to mention Tom Friedman's notion of a "flat world." That may be the most overquoted phrase in recent memory. But Friedman brings home how we no longer exist in a world that is isolated by regional, state, national, or international boundaries.

This global competition affects higher education just as it does every other sector of the economy. We see this every day in the university. We are in a global competition for the very best faculty in the world. In fact, nearly a quarter of the faculty we recruited in the last year came from overseas. This very school offers a remarkable statement about global competition.

What can I say, so does my presence!

This increasingly global competition requires that our own students be prepared for the rigors of the international marketplace. When Purdue Engineering and Technology students intern with world-class companies like Cummins, General Electric, Rolls-Royce, and Raytheon, they are learning how to operate within a global framework.

4.4 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: RESEARCH SPACE

IU's potential as a strategic international partner depends on excellent faculty teaching first-rate students. But it also requires space.

When I became vice president of research, I commissioned an assessment of our research space needs. That report starkly stated that at IU Bloomington alone over 1M square ft of research space is needed to meet our full potential as a research university.

Simon Hall is the first major new building to open on the Bloomington campus in over twenty years.

Construction here at IUPUI has been more vigorous, but the need for space here is just as acute. The Health Information and Translational Sciences Building, which opened in March here at IUPUI, added well over 150K square feet of space. And the Research 3 building is under construction and will add almost a quarter of a million square feet of space.

More important, both of these buildings will strengthen the university's efforts to improve Hoosier health and save Hoosier lives.

5. CONCLUSION

Working together, IU Bloomington with IUPUI, IU with Purdue, we can greatly strengthen higher education in Indiana. We can create more and better opportunities to educate Hoosiers. And we can make these life-changing strategic priorities a reality.

Thank you very much.