

“A Legacy of Academic Leadership: Celebrating the Service of Provost Karen Hanson”

Karen Hanson Farewell Reception

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President

Indiana University

IU Auditorium

Thursday, January 12, 2012

4:00 PM

INTRODUCTION

Thank you, Gwyn [Richards].

One of Karen Hanson’s favorite writers and philosophers, Henry David Thoreau, wrote in *Walden*:

“that if one advances confidently in the direction of his [or her] dreams and endeavors to live the life which he [or she] has imagined, he [or she] will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”¹

Karen has shared those words with thousands of students—in the classroom and from the stage of this Auditorium at Honors Convocations and at Freshman Induction ceremonies—but she also exemplifies them.

The reflections we’ve heard this afternoon from her colleagues are testament to the success Karen has achieved and to the truly outstanding service that she has given to Indiana University.

¹ Henry David Thoreau, Walden, (T. Y. Crowell & Co., 1910), 427.

All of us are truly grateful for that service. And while we are certainly very sorry indeed to see Karen leave the Bloomington campus, we send her off with our congratulations and very best wishes.

The University of Minnesota is gaining an outstanding educator, a talented administrator, and an exceptional scholar.

INVALUABLE EXPERIENCE, A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP

As you've heard, Karen came to the position of provost with more than 30 years' experience as a member of the Bloomington faculty.

That invaluable experience gave her the perspective to understand the important work of the faculty "from the inside."

As she came up through the faculty ranks into positions of academic leadership, she brought with her an intimate understanding of—and an abiding respect for—the work of the faculty.

She also brought with her a philosopher's perspective. Her training in the discipline undoubtedly helped to shape her ethical, logical, and disciplined approach to the issues she faced as provost.

After more than four years in the position, Karen's accomplishments are many.

As Gwyn pointed out, she reorganized the Dean of Faculties Office and created the offices of the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs and the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education. These two offices, still relatively new, have already had an enormous impact on the campus' ability to serve faculty and students.

With IUPUI Chancellor Charles Bantz, Karen co-chaired the New Academic Directions Committee, which examined the academic structures and programs of the university.

I charged the committee members to be bold in their thinking, and, indeed, the report they produced has far-reaching consequences for Indiana University. It is, I believe, one of the most significant reports in the university's recent history, and it will move Indiana University forward in a number of ways.

Since the report was issued, Karen has been working diligently on the implementation of a number of its recommendations. She has, in fact, continued to work on these important matters through her final days on campus.

She has also held several open meetings with faculty, inviting them to voice questions and concerns about the report. Karen values the input of others and always seeks to address and resolve critical issues collaboratively.

Under Karen's charge as chief academic officer, task forces have examined and reported on topics of great importance to the campus, including undergraduate education, student life, academic advising, and traffic safety. Many of the recommendations made by these task forces have been implemented. Those changes benefit our students in a multitude of ways and they will long be part of Karen's legacy.

As provost, Karen has also been a relentless advocate for diversity. She appointed a campus Diversity Committee and has lent steadfast support to campus diversity initiatives and has worked to help recruit and retain underserved minority undergraduate and graduate students.

It is also worth noting that Karen began her career at a time that was rather challenging for women in academia. Despite the large increase in the number of women who were receiving doctoral degrees, women were very much underrepresented on the faculties

of major research universities in the mid-1970s. Karen's career has been—and remains—a model for women faculty and administrators.

I have always appreciated the sound advice that Karen has offered as a member of the President's Cabinet and other bodies.

As we've worked together over these four-and-a-half years, I've been grateful more generally for her intelligent and thoughtful advice, especially regarding academic matters that affect the campus and the university.

It comes as no surprise that others likewise seek her wise counsel.

The Education Advisory Board, a research and consulting firm that works with the provosts of the nation's leading universities as part of its University Leadership Council, was very keen to work with Karen.

That collaboration has benefitted IU in numerous ways, including an ongoing campus-wide conversation on the future of the University Libraries in the digital age.

Karen has also been a very active and highly-respected member of the Association of American Universities' provost group and of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation, an organization founded by Herman Wells. The CIC, as many of you know, is a consortium led by the provosts of the Big Ten universities and the University of Chicago. I know that the other CIC provosts are very glad that Karen will remain a member as provost at Minnesota.

Karen has also been a strong supporter of the university's varied cultural and artistic endeavors. During her tenure as provost, she has been a great supporter of the IU Cinema, and was heavily involved in the implementation of its operational side, helping to hire its first director, who has proved to be an excellent appointment. We were

fortunate to have Karen, who is a cinephile and who, in her role as a philosopher has written on film, as provost during this important time for the IU Cinema.

Of course, many of Karen's accomplishments as provost at IU cannot be quantified.

She has worked to foster interfaculty collaboration across disciplines and across the schools; she has helped to develop scholars at all stages of their academic careers; and she has worked unremittingly to ensure and enhance the academic standards of the campus—always a demanding and difficult task.

For three-and-a-half decades, she has been an outstanding teacher and scholar.

She has been a model campus citizen, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to service to the campus.

She has continually demonstrated her intelligence and her loyalty to the university by taking on tasks and pursuing their implementation with great determination.

She has inspired personal and professional growth, reflection, and renewal among her faculty colleagues.

And she has encouraged critical thinking and motivated countless students to become lifelong learners.

By virtually any measure, Indiana University is a stronger academic institution thanks to the many contributions of Karen Hanson.

PRESENTATION OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEDAL FOR EXCELLENCE

Karen, would you please join me at the podium?

In recognition of all that you have done for Indiana University, for its students, for your faculty colleagues, and for all that you have done to elevate the intellectual tone of the IU Bloomington campus, it is my great pleasure to present you with the highest honor an Indiana University president can bestow: the President's Medal for Excellence.

This medal itself is a reproduction in silver of the symbolic jewel of office worn by Indiana University's president at ceremonial occasions. The precious stones represent the university's cultivation of reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as the arts, sciences, and humanities.

Criteria for recipients of this honor include distinction in public service, service to Indiana University, achievement in a profession, and/or extraordinary merit and achievement in the arts, humanities, sciences, education, and industry.

Karen, you have exceeded these criteria during the course of your outstanding career at Indiana University, and for that let me extend our deepest and most grateful thanks.

So, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the trustees of Indiana University, and in gratitude for your extraordinary service, dedication, and leadership over many years, I am privileged and honored to present to you the President's Medal for Excellence.

Congratulations!