

“Atkinson and Seffrin:
Exemplars of Excellence at Indiana University”

Dinner Honoring 2008 Winter Honorary Degree Recipient
and Commencement Speaker

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President

Indiana University

Indiana Memorial Union

Federal Room

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7:00 p.m.

1. TOAST

Laurie and I are delighted to welcome you all to this evening of celebration in honor of our distinguished guests President Emeritus of the University of California Dr. Richard Atkinson and his wife Rita and President of the American Cancer Society Dr. John Seffrin, his wife Carol, and daughter Mary.

We will have more formal remarks a little later in the evening.

Now would you please join me in raising your glasses to the remarkable accomplishments of our distinguished guests. Dr. Atkinson represents the many and varied doors opened by an IU education; and Dr. Seffrin's achievements reflect the level of scholarship and leadership that we value so highly at Indiana University.

To Dr. Atkinson and Dr. Seffrin.

Please enjoy your meal.

2. WELCOME AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you all for coming this evening.

We are pleased that so many distinguished guests could join us this evening.

Laurie and I are pleased to welcome Our Indiana University Trustees: Sue Talbot and her husband Bob; Pat Shoulders, who is Vice President of the Trustees and who deserves our congratulations on his receiving the William G. Baker Award from the Indiana Bar Association for outstanding dedication to citizenship education; Tom Reilly; A.D. King; and Phil Eskew.

I am also pleased to welcome the families of our esteemed guests. Would you join me in greeting Richard Atkinson's wife Rita? And John Seffrin's wife Carole and his daughter Mary?

As everyone here this evening knows, Indiana University's two fundamental missions are excellence in education and research. There may be no stronger evidence of these longstanding missions than the two people we are honoring this evening.

Our Commencement speaker, Dr. Richard Atkinson earned his doctorate in psychology from IU in 1955, and has received an honorary degree from IU, and our honorary degree recipient Dr. John Seffrin was a celebrated member of the IU faculty for over a decade. Both have gone on to distinguish themselves in their fields and beyond with tremendous service to the nation and the world.

Now it is my great pleasure to introduce them in more detail.

3. HONORING RICHARD ATKINSON

More than a decade ago, in an address on “The Future of the University of California,” Richard Atkinson said: “The role of knowledge in transforming virtually every aspect of our world has moved research universities . . . to center stage of American life, . . . educat[ing] the people who drive our economy and [producing] the new . . . ideas that keep it growing.”¹

Statements such as this are among the many reasons that Richard Atkinson is considered a visionary leader within the field of higher education.

Dr. Atkinson has had an extraordinarily long and distinguished career as one of the nation’s leading scientists, and higher education administrators, and educators. In fact, our own Richard Shiffrin was one of Dr. Atkinson’s students.

Richard Atkinson is internationally respected as a scholar and scientist whose theory of human memory has been instrumental in guiding research in the field. Indeed, his scientific contributions have led to his election to the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Medicine, the National Academy of Education, and the American Philosophical Society.

After earning his doctorate from IU, he went on to a distinguished teaching career at Stanford and UCLA. In 1975, President Gerald Ford appointed him deputy director of the National Science Foundation. Two years later, Dr. Atkinson became the first—and so far the only— social scientist to direct the NSF. There, he oversaw the organization’s first \$1 billion budget and negotiated the first memorandum in history for the exchange of scientists and scholars between the United States and the People’s Republic of China.

¹ Atkinson, Richard C. “The Future of the University of California.” University of California at San Diego Website. <<http://www.rca.ucsd.edu/comments/futureof.htm>>. September 1998.

Dr. Atkinson's achievements as a senior university administrator have been equally impressive. He became the fifth chancellor of UC San Diego in 1980. During his 15-year tenure, the university doubled in size and consistently ranked among the top five universities in federal funding for research.

From 1995 to 2003, Dr. Atkinson served as the 17th president of the University of California, leading that institution through a period of tremendous growth and change. During his tenure, UC enrollment increased by approximately 30,000 students. The university broke ground on its 10th campus—UC Merced— which officially opened in 2005. And it also broke ground on the new UC San Francisco Mission Bay health sciences campus.

Along with this expansion, Dr. Atkinson emphasized the highest quality among students and faculty. Through new admissions programs, UC ensured that high-achieving students throughout California have access to a UC education. And under Dr. Atkinson's leadership, faculty salaries rebounded to competitive levels, UC set records in federal research funding and private donations, and 17 UC researchers-- --or researchers from the associated national laboratories were awarded Nobel Prizes from 1995 to 2003. That is over two Nobel Prizes per year for eight years.

I could add to this list of achievements, Dr. Atkinson's many honors, including prestigious fellowships, awards for distinguished research and services, and over a dozen honorary degrees, including a doctor of science from IU. In 2003, he received the Vannevar Bush award for his great contributions to the nation in science and technology. Although the state of California celebrated Dr. Richard Atkinson Day on August 25, 2003, perhaps Dr. Atkinson's highest honor is having a mountain in Antarctica named in his honor.

It is my privilege to introduce Richard Atkinson.

Would you like to say a few words?

5. HONORING JOHN SEFFRIN

To many of you here this evening, John Seffrin, the longtime chair of IU's Department of Applied Health Science at the School of HPER, needs no introduction. Under his leadership, from 1979 to 1992, the Department of Applied Health Science became one of the nation's premier programs. During his tenure, he foresaw a growing need for education and research related to healthful lifestyles and disease prevention. In response to this need, he set out to expand the department's curriculum in a number of areas.

He also served as director of IU's Center for Health and Safety Studies, chair of the university's Hazard Control Program Advisory Board, and co-director of IU's Institute for Drug Abuse Prevention.

In 1992, John was selected as the CEO of the American Cancer Society, the world's largest voluntary health organization. Over the past 16 years, he has led a major reorganization effort, resulting in historic growth at the 92-year-old society. Indeed, the center now operates 20 programs in 20 different countries. More important, the center is leading efforts to achieve a 50 percent reduction in the rate of cancer mortality by the year 2015, one of the goals John set early in his tenure.

At the same time as he led the American Cancer Society, John also served as volunteer president of the International Union Against Cancer, an international effort to control and eradicate cancer. He was a member of the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on Smoking and Health; treasurer of the Partnership for Prevention; co-chair of the National Cancer Legislation Advisory Committee; chair of the National Health Council Board of Directors; and treasurer of the National Dialogue on Cancer, chaired by President George H. W. Bush.

For his outstanding service and accomplishments, John has received several prestigious honors, including Presidential Citations from two health education societies,

in 1999 and 2007. In 1980 he was named a Sagamore of the Wabash, by Governor Otis Bowen and again in 1988 by Robert Orr. He was named a Kentucky Colonel in 1983, and the following year he received the Murray A. Auerbach Medal, the highest award given by the American Lung Association in Indiana.

His dedication to the fight against cancer— as well as his leadership in the movement to control the use of tobacco— has been nothing short of inspirational.

Those of you who know John— or heard him speak earlier today— know that he is dedicated to winning the fight against cancer. The American Cancer Society’s new focus is on making quality health care accessible to all Americans. As John has said, "Cancer is arguably the most treatable and the most preventable of all chronic diseases— if every American had access to prevention, early detection, and cutting-edge treatment opportunities. It's up to each of us to ensure that access. After all, when it comes to saving lives, if we *can* do it, we *must* do it." ²

John, it is my great pleasure to introduce you this evening.

On behalf of all whose lives have been touched by cancer, thank you for all you have done and will continue to do.

John, would you like to say a few words?

6. CONCLUSION

Thank you all for coming this evening, and I look forward to seeing you at tomorrow’s commencement ceremony.

²CEO Roundtable on Cancer, Inc. *CEO Cancer Gold Standard*. "Leading the Way: John Seffrin." <<http://www.cancergoldstandard.org>>.