

Neurosciences Research Building Dedication

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President, Indiana University

Room 101, Neurosciences Research Building

IUPUI

Wednesday, October 1, 2014

3:30 p.m.

1. “NO SCIENTIFIC STUDY MORE VITAL”

In his 1979 essay “Thinking About the Brain,” Francis Crick, who, along with Indiana University alumnus James Watson, received the Nobel Prize for the discovery of the double helix structure of DNA, wrote that “there is no scientific study more vital to man than the study of his own brain.”<sup>1</sup>

Today, the importance of neurosciences research simply cannot be overstated.

Early last year, President Barack Obama announced the BRAIN Initiative, a decade-long scientific effort to examine the workings of the human brain and build a comprehensive map of its activity. This initiative will, in the words of National Institutes of Health Director Francis Collins, lead to “knowledge that will be an essential guide to progress in diagnosing, treating, and potentially curing the neurological diseases and disorders that devastate so many lives.”<sup>2</sup>

A 2007 report by the World Health Organization delineated the scope and scale of these diseases and disorders, estimating that neurological disorders affect as many as one billion people worldwide.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> F. H. C. Crick, “Thinking About the Brain,” as reprinted in *The Brain*, (Scientific American, 1979), 136.

<sup>2</sup> Francis S. Collins, charge to the NIH BRAIN Working Group, April 2013, as quoted in the Advisory Committee to the NIH Director, Interim Report, BRAIN Working Group, September 16, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> “Neurological Disorders: Public Health Challenges,” (World Health Organization, 2006), 177.

In her 2009 Senate subcommittee testimony, Eve Marder, then-president of the Society for Neuroscience, observed that “the more than 1,000 disorders of the brain and nervous system result in more hospitalizations than any other disease group, including heart disease and cancer.”<sup>4</sup>

In the magnificent facility we dedicate today, Indiana University researchers will seek to unlock the secrets of the central nervous system as they search for the causes and cures of many of these devastating conditions.

The practical applications that will come as a result of their work will improve—and save—human lives.

## 2. THE VITAL NEED FOR RESEARCH SPACE

If great public universities like Indiana University are to continue to conduct the vital research that transforms our world and enhances our lives, then faculty and students must have the facilities and the space to support learning and research.

In my former role as Vice President for Research, I appointed a committee to conduct a thorough study of the research space needs of the IU Bloomington and IUPUI campuses. The study, completed in 2004, noted that lack of space “... represents possibly the biggest single impediment to IU reaching its full potential as a research university.”<sup>5</sup> The report stated that we would need about 5 million square feet of space—that is space equivalent to about 20 buildings the size of IUPUI’s Campus Center—over the next ten to twenty years.

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<sup>4</sup> Eve Marder, testimony before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies.

<sup>5</sup> Research Space Task Forces of IUB and IUPUI. “Indiana University’s Need for Research Space: A Report to the Vice President for Research and University Architect.” Indiana University, Bloomington, IN. 10 Aug. 2004.

We have made great progress in addressing the research space shortage across the university, especially in the life and health sciences. In Bloomington, we have seen the construction of Simon Hall and the Multidisciplinary Science Building II. Here in Indianapolis, we have seen the construction of Joseph E. Walther Hall, the Health Information and Translational Sciences Building, and, more recently, the Science and Engineering Laboratory Building.

This wonderful Neurosciences Research Building, designed to accommodate the tremendous breadth of expertise of the scientists who will work here, is an essential step in further addressing the shortage of research and laboratory space.

In fact, the provision of such facilities is the “duty and responsibility” of Indiana University under the agreement that established the IUPUI campus.

### 3. A SPIRIT OF COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

In 2012, we celebrated the opening of the adjacent IU Health Neuroscience Center Building, a superb facility where patients suffering from neurological illnesses now receive the latest and most effective treatments. This center is just one of many ways in which our partners at IU Health—one of the largest health systems in the nation—help to bring the great clinical expertise and the breakthrough research of the IU School of Medicine to Indiana citizens. Together, IU Health and the IU School of Medicine make enormous contributions to the health and wellbeing of hundreds of thousands of Hoosiers every day.

And, together, these two buildings constitute one of the largest groups of neuroscience researchers and clinicians anywhere in the country. The proximity of these splendid facilities further strengthens the collaboration between our outstanding clinicians and our world-class researchers. And as a result, research findings will be more rapidly

translated to the clinic, and patients and their physicians will have rapid access to the latest discoveries.

#### 4. SPECIAL THANKS

A number of people deserve our special thanks today.

Let me first recognize how grateful we are for the support that the Indiana General Assembly has given us over the years, and particularly for their appropriation of \$35 million for the building we celebrate today. The relationship between public higher education and the representatives of the people of this state who are elected and who serve in state government is a partnership that has worked well for many, many years. At IU, we value that partnership and look forward to doing our part to strengthen it even more in the years to come.

I also want to commend Chancellor Charles Bantz; former Vice President for University Clinical Affairs and Dean of the IU School of Medicine, Craig Brater—during whose tenure the planning for this facility began; his successor, Jay Hess, under whose leadership the facility has been completed; as well as the many members of the faculty and staff of the IU School of Medicine who have helped to make this ambitious vision a reality.

I also want to commend Vice President for Capital Planning and Facilities Tom Morrison as well as the many design and construction professionals, both internal and external, who contributed to this project.

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

## 5. CONCLUSION

The groundbreaking work that occurs in the Neurosciences Research Building will affect the lives of people across Indiana and around the world in a tremendously positive way. It is another example of the vital role Indiana University plays in the growth and health of the state of Indiana.

It represents limitless potential for our research faculty as they work to unlock the secrets of the most complex structure in the known universe—the human central nervous system.

The entire state looks forward to celebrating the advancements in the prevention, treatment, and cures of neurological illnesses that this facility will surely foster.