

2007 IU External Relations Retreat

Remarks as Prepared for Michael A. McRobbie

President

Indiana University

Whittenberger Auditorium

IU Bloomington

October 26, 2007

8:30 a.m.

1. INTRODUCTION

Thank you, Vice President Sample. I am pleased to be able to join all of you this morning and spend a few minutes discussing our communications and public affairs needs.

For those of you who have traveled here from our regional campuses, welcome to IU Bloomington and the IMU. I hope your stay here has been comfortable.

I am told that we have about 140 of our professional communicators here, representing all eight campuses and all levels of responsibility. I am delighted that so many of you were able to take part in this retreat, because communicating with the world—both externally and internally—is such an important part of what we do as an institution.

2. COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION

You all work for different campuses and different schools, and you all have different bosses. But I consider all of you to be a part of the Indiana University communications

team. It is my hope that you will all cooperate and collaborate whenever possible to make the most impact on your many audiences.

Collectively, the tasks you perform each day are vitally important to IU. We have many audiences that we must reach if we are to succeed as a university.

As you know, last week in my inaugural address I laid out my vision for IU. In a nutshell it is this: to ensure that IU emerges as one of the best public research universities of the 21st century.

We will reach that goal by developing ever-greater excellence in our two enduring missions. These are to provide the best possible education for our students, and to vigorously pursue world-class research in the sciences, the professions, the humanities, and the creative arts.

As a public university, we also have a third important mission, which is service and engagement. We must do all that we can to help the state of Indiana—and its individual communities—thrive in the global economy of the 21st century.

3. NEW INITIATIVES FOR A BETTER FUTURE

To achieve these goals, I announced several major new initiatives. We will bring to IU more of the nation's—and the world's—top academic talent. We will provide \$1 million dollars in incentives to encourage more intercampus research projects between Bloomington and Indianapolis.

We will improve our graduation rates on every campus. And I will provide the chancellors with the resources they need to get the job done.

We will upgrade all IU Bloomington residence halls over the next 15 years to give our students the quality of living and learning spaces they will demand.

We will be launching a half billion dollars in new construction initiatives in Bloomington and Indianapolis.

I have decided to call our new statewide engagement effort “Innovate Indiana” to fully encompass all that it will entail. Every campus will find itself involved in “Innovate Indiana” initiatives.

We will build a new international studies building here in Bloomington that will house many of IU’s international departments, programs and centers. And to give more IU students a chance to study overseas, we will be raising a new multi-million dollar endowment to support scholarships for that purpose.

4. COMMUNICATING THE MISSION

All of you at some point will be involved in communicating these new initiatives to our many audiences.

Not long ago, your means of communicating with mass audiences were limited. You were mostly restricted to some form of the printed page, be it a newspaper article, a magazine, a pamphlet, or a poster.

Today, the Internet and digital communications have changed the way we interact with our audiences. Our audiences come to us for information—by accessing our Web sites—probably as often as we go to them. We are able to make use of every form of media, from the printed word and still photography to blogging, videocasting, and podcasting. And we can combine these media into all sorts of compelling presentations.

These new opportunities to reach mass audiences require a strong measure of creativity and imagination. That alone is reason for you to seek out your colleagues and look for ways to collaborate. The more brains applied to a problem, the more likely it is that an effective solution will be found.

5. CONCLUSION

We have many challenges.

Externally, we must communicate with prospective students, and, of course, their parents. This might sound simple, but as you well know, young people today are tuned into an entirely different universe of media than their parents. Reaching both groups requires entirely different strategies.

Our donors and prospective donors constitute another vitally important audience. They need to know that we are using their gifts wisely and that they have made good investments in the future. We must find ways to reach them, but not overwhelm them.

Likewise, Indiana University has more than a half million living alumni with whom we want to keep in touch. Just keeping track of them is a major undertaking, and I am pleased to say we are doing this quite well.

Because we are a public institution, we must communicate with the general public, especially taxpayers who want to know that their tax dollars are being put to good use. And then there are specialized audiences we target, including legislators and government officials, business and community leaders, all of whom can be described as opinion leaders. They need a constant flow of information from us.

Finally, we have several internal audiences who have markedly different information needs. On the one hand are our students, 99,000 of them in all, whose lives are full and busy. Getting their attention is not easy.

Then there are 7,000 faculty members and 11,000 staff members on eight campuses. They have a strong interest in news about IU, and we need to make it easy for them to access it in an efficient format.

All of that adds up to many challenges for those of you in this room. I am glad you have come together today to get to know each other better and to discuss these challenges.

Your knowledge, passion, and ability to communicate what makes IU such an outstanding institution gives me great hope that we will meet all of these challenges. Your work is critical if we are to become one of the leading universities of the 21st century.

Thank you for being here, and thank you for your dedicated service to Indiana University.