

1846 words/ 12.7 minutes

IU Board of Trustees Business Meeting  
Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie  
President, Indiana University  
Via Zoom  
Monday, August 14, 2020  
11.15 a.m.

Trustees—at the December 2015 Board of Trustees meeting, you approved an extension of my contract as President of Indiana University for one year to June 30, 2021 to allow for all the activities associated with our Bicentennial Year to be completed before the search began for a new President.

Most of these activities have now been completed. At the October Board of Trustees meeting this year we will announce the final details of our immensely successful “For All Bicentennial Campaign” and provide a final report on the completion of our transformative *Bicentennial Strategic Plan*. Unfortunately, our commemorations of the Bicentennial itself, which were in full swing earlier this year, were dramatically curtailed and truncated by the coronavirus pandemic though we hope that some of these commemorative events can still be scheduled this Bicentennial calendar year or this academic year. Of course, we were still able to hold a series of memorable and historic events officially commemorating and celebrating the Bicentennial including on the day of our Bicentennial January 20, 2020.

So, given the successful conclusion of all these Bicentennial initiatives, it is my intention to retire as President of Indiana University as planned on June 30, 2021. Announcing my retirement now will ensure that you have enough time to commence a search for my successor. I thank you for the trust you placed in me over 13 years ago, and for your constant and unfailing support ever since.

Of course, there is never a good time to leave the place and people you love. I recognize this announcement arrives in the midst of a time when thousands in the IU

community are working tirelessly to ensure the safest possible start to the fall semester. I am, of course, completely committed to continuing to work with all of them to overcome the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure that the university emerges better than ever from this present crisis.

By June 30, 2021 I will have been President of Indiana University for 14 years which will be one of the longer presidential tenures in IU's history and one of the longer recent tenures among AAU presidents. And by the end of 2020 I will have served Indiana University in senior positions for 24 years—over a third of my life.

I came to Indiana University in January 1997 from a foreign country and from a modest background, the first in my family with a degree, to be IU's first VP for Information Technology. One of the first senior members of the university I met was Herman Wells. Never did I for one second dream that less than 10 years later I would be named as one of his successors.

I am a proud immigrant who became a citizen 10 years ago. That I was welcomed to this country and was able to rise to this position reflects the very best of the United States as a country that embraced immigrants and valued them for what they can contribute to strengthening the country in countless ways. The United States is, after all, a country of immigrants. Twenty percent of the presidents of American universities in the AAU are foreign born as are, it is estimated, 20 percent of our faculty. It is my hope, and I am sure that of many of us, that one day we will again see immigration and immigrants widely valued for how they strengthen the United States and not demonized as undesirables.

In this context, I am particularly proud of all that we have been able to do to renew and rejuvenate Indiana University's international engagement. I have noted repeatedly that our three principal missions—the creation, dissemination, and preservation of knowledge, are completely global in character and do not take place within the isolated confines of a single country. International engagement is fundamental to who we are

and what we do. To ignore this is to become isolated, parochial and, ultimately, second-rate. This engagement has, of course, suffered a difficult setback with the pandemic. But it is crucial that as a great research university we lead the way to rapid recovery and re-engagement in this area as the impact of the pandemic begins to subside.

I am immensely proud of all that has been accomplished over the period I have been president. All the change and effort have, I believe, consolidated and elevated IU's position as one of America's premier and leading research universities. I will be reviewing these accomplishments in detail in my final State of the University address later this year, as well as describing the challenges the university faces in the future and what needs to be done to build on and sustain the gains we have made.

But this has not been a one-person show. It is the collective product of the hard and unremitting work of the members, past and present, of an outstanding Cabinet of individuals who are masters of their fields; an excellent group of deans and chancellors; the strong support of the faculty who, contrary to media mythology, have embraced change not resisted it; an exceptional staff right across the university whose professionalism and dedication has been the lynch-pin of so many of our successes; and a highly talented and engaged student body who, year after year, graduate to build careers that bring great pride and distinction to Indiana University. I thank them all most sincerely personally and on behalf of Indiana University for all their efforts.

All of these people can be immensely proud over the last 13 years:

- That we have continued to be affordable and accessible to all, with 75% of our students being Hoosiers and 25% of our students coming from minority backgrounds, and with graduation rates and graduating numbers at all-time highs;
- That for three consecutive years, IU's student body has included more than 20,000 degree-seeking minority students, setting a new record for diversity at the

university, and representing nearly a doubling of the number of minority students at IU since 2007;

- That we have seen a modernization of the curriculum with over 500 new degrees of all kinds, and with over 30% of these in the STEM disciplines;
- That we have carried out the most comprehensive academic overhaul ever in our history, with new schools and programs in multiple areas including public health, international studies, architecture and finally, after nearly 200 years, engineering;
- That, led by the School of Medicine, we have attracted record levels of research funding and have submitted record numbers of research grant proposals—never have our faculty been more engaged in research;
- That more broadly, in close partnership with IU Health, we have greatly advanced IU's leadership in health sciences education and research that will culminate on the Bloomington campus in the construction of the new IU Health Regional Academic Health Center, while we have established the first two schools of public health in Indiana, a discipline whose centrality to fighting the pandemic is now widely acknowledged;
- That there has been a rediscovery of the importance and value of all our priceless collections, especially as they support our lustrous standing in the arts and humanities, and the implementation of a strategic plan focused on their rejuvenation and restoration of these collections;
- That we have information technology infrastructure, services, and staff unrivalled anywhere in the country for their excellence, all of which in turn enabled us to build IU Online, one of the most highly ranked online programs in the country, which, in turn, gave us the tools and experience to so quickly adapt to the challenges of the pandemic;

- That we will have renovated nearly all major buildings across IU and built new buildings and structures, including the completion of the IU Bloomington athletics masterplan, involving over 200 projects at a cost of nearly \$2.7 billion, including the elimination of nearly all of the original \$1 billion of deferred maintenance;
- That through the generosity of hundreds of thousands of donors, we have increased the all-time number of endowed chairs and professorships by 228 or 50%, and of scholarships and fellowships by over 5700 or 45%, during our Bicentennial Campaign in which faculty and staff have been particularly generous having given over \$250 million in gifts.

And I especially want to take this opportunity to thank my personal staff in both Bloomington and Indianapolis, both past and present, for their superb work in supporting me under the greatest and most unremitting of pressure, in some cases almost daily, for the last 13 years. I owe them all a great debt of gratitude as does Indiana University. Without diminishing the contribution of any of them I do want to single out some for mention, as many of them labor in anonymity: the indefatigable Karen Adams, who has been with me nearly my whole career at IU, the Bicentennial Queen Kelly Kish, Nicole Todd, Carol Isaacs, JoAnn Bush, Gail Weaver, Vicki Petermichel, Debra Neff, Sarah Tosick, Brittany Santa, Anthony Warner, Greg Buse, Becky Wood, Ryan Piurek, Randy Williamson, Jenna Whitaker, Chad Werner, Brandi Host, Julie Floreancig, Elaine Finley, Diane Jung, Devin McGuire, Joe Husk, and the late Marcia Pickett.

I do want to acknowledge, too, our children, Josephine, Lucien, Arabella, Carol, Charlie, and Margaret, of whom Laurie and I are very proud. Over the last 13 years, they have graduated, got jobs, got married and had children, too. Neither of us have seen as much of them during this period as we would have liked, but we hope that will soon change. We now have three grandchildren—John, Amelia, and Petra, of whom I have seen very

little, and the most recent, Petra, who arrived less than two weeks ago, we have not seen at all, an omission we intend to rectify very soon.

Finally, I want to thank Laurie. A week ago, we celebrated 15 years of marriage—15 years of the utmost personal tranquility, harmony, and contentment. For 13 of those years she has been constantly at my side as IU's First Lady. She has dedicated herself to pursuing well-regarded initiatives in technology, the STEM disciplines, and philanthropy, especially concerning the role of women in these areas and the need for their full historical recognition. She has been a wonderful representative of the university at thousands of events and functions here and abroad. In as much as I can claim any success in my years as president, my debt to her for her counsel and companionship is beyond words.

At the unveiling and dedication of his official presidential portrait in 2004 my close friend the late Myles Brand, the 16<sup>th</sup> president of Indiana University and one of its finest, said that leading Indiana University is a hallowed trust that one is privileged to have but for a fleeting moment. He went on to say, though, that what was important was to try to leave it a better place when you left it. Trustees—I hope that when I depart from this role on June 30 next year that you and others will judge that I left it a better place.

Thank you.