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Presentation of the President's Medal for Excellence to John Lechleiter

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President, Indiana University

Lilly House

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1. WELCOME

Good evening.

Laurie and I are very pleased that all of you could join us this evening for this reception in honor of John Lechleiter, who retired at the end of last year as chairman, president, and CEO of Eli Lilly & Company.

I want to extend my greetings to Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett, who is with us this evening. Would you help me welcome Mayor Hogsett?

We are also joined this evening by a number of current and former senior leaders of Indiana University, including vice presidents, deans, members of the IU Foundation Board, and current and former members of the IU Board of Trustees.

I want to recognize three current trustees who are here tonight. With us are: Vice Chair of the Trustees MaryEllen Bishop and her husband, Michael; Trustee Phil Eskew and his wife, Ann; and Anna Williams, our student trustee. Also with us are Tom Reilly, former chair of the Board of Trustees, and Harry Gonso, former vice chair of the board. Would you join me in welcoming them?

I also want to welcome all of John's friends and former colleagues who are here.

And I want to extend a special welcome to John's wife, Sarah Lechleiter, who is also one of Indiana's most eminent civic leaders. Please join me in welcoming her.

2. THE LILLY HOUSE

I want to begin by welcoming you to the Lilly House. The house was built in 1931 for Eli and Ruth Austin Lilly on a portion of the estate of Eli's father, J.K. Lilly. In 1971, it was given to Indiana University as the Indianapolis residence of the president.

The Lilly House is just one of many manifestations of the incomparable generosity of the Lilly family toward Indiana University. It is also a fitting location to honor a leader who recently retired after a highly distinguished 37-year career at Eli Lilly & Company, the last eight of which he served at the helm—John Lechleiter.

3. HONORING JOHN LECHLEITER

For more than a generation, John devoted his professional life to the growth and success of Lilly, one of the strongest anchors of Indiana's economic landscape and a company that embodies the importance of the life sciences in that economy.

He joined Lilly in 1979 as a senior organic chemist, and subsequently served with great distinction in a variety of management roles over the years, including chief operating officer, president and CEO, and chairman of the board.

Throughout his distinguished career, John demonstrated visionary leadership and an unswerving commitment to improving health. He successfully increased the diversity of Lilly's scientific workforce, making diversity an underpinning of Lilly's success.

John and Sarah have also been inspiring philanthropists and great friends of Indiana University for many years. Their personal financial commitments to countless drives, pledges, funds, fellowships and programs—as well as John’s stewardship of Eli Lilly & Company’s longstanding close partnership with Indiana University—have been instrumental to the growth and continued success of the IU School of Medicine, the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, and the Herron School of Art and Design, just to name a few.

John’s support, for example, was instrumental in the establishment of the August M. Watanabe Prize in Translational Research in the IU School of Medicine. The prize is named in honor of the late IU Department of Medicine chair and senior Lilly executive, Gus Watanabe, and was established with a generous leadership grant from the Lilly Foundation.

John and Sarah have also been longtime supporters of the United Way of Central Indiana, and I think most of you are aware of the extraordinarily generous \$5 million gift they made last fall—the largest gift received from an individual donor in the United Way of Central Indiana’s nearly-100-year-history. The gift will support the expansion of high-quality early childhood education centers in central Indiana, as well as the United Way of Central Indiana’s Center for Working Families network. John also serves as chair of the Board of Trustees of United Way Worldwide.

John has, of course, been widely honored for his achievements.

In 2013, during the dedication ceremony for the Science and Engineering Laboratory Building on the IUPUI campus, it was my privilege to bestow an honorary IU doctorate on him.

In 2014, BioCrossroads honored him with the August M. Wantanabe Life Sciences Champion of the Year Award for his work in supporting the development of the Indiana Biosciences Research Institute.

In 2015, he received the 2015 International Citizen of the Year Award from the International Center of Indianapolis.

John and Sarah jointly received the 2016 Charles L. Whistler Award from the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee for helping to bring together the public and private sector for civic improvement in Indianapolis.

I am very pleased to add to his honors tonight.

John, would you join me at the podium?

4. PRESENTATION OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEDAL FOR EXCELLENCE

In recognition of all that you have done for the life sciences in the state of Indiana during your distinguished career, and in gratitude for all you have done for Indiana University, 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.

This medal is given to recognize exceptional distinction in public service, service to Indiana University, achievement in a profession, or extraordinary merit and achievement in the arts, humanities, sciences, education, and industry.

John, in every one of these categories, your distinction has been extraordinary.

So, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Trustees of Indiana University, and in gratitude for your outstanding service and for the strong leadership and character you have exhibited over many years, I am privileged and honored to present to you the President's Medal for Excellence.

Congratulations!

John, I am sure we would all like to hear a few words from you.

5. CONCLUSION

Thank you, John, for those heartfelt words. Once again, the entire Indiana University community gives you its deepest and most grateful thanks for your excellent service to IU and to the state.

And thank all of you for coming this evening.

Please join me once again in expressing our congratulations and thanks to John Lechleiter.