

# “A Campus Home at Indiana University Southeast”

## IU Southeast Student Housing Dedication

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie  
President  
Indiana University  
University Center Commons (Tent)  
IU Southeast  
New Albany, Indiana  
Wednesday, October 15, 2008  
2:00 p.m.

### 1. MEDITATIONS ON THE MEANING OF HOME

Over a century ago, the celebrated art and social critic John Ruskin wrote: “[H]ome . . . is the place of peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division.”<sup>1</sup> As we celebrate and dedicate this new student housing here at Indiana University Southeast, we should keep in mind Ruskin’s meditations on the meaning and importance of home.

When many of us think of home, we imagine places where we belong, where we feel comfortable, where we are part of a community. As Robert Frost put it, “Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, John. *Sesame and Lilies: Three Lectures*. Philadelphia: Henry Altemus, 1893. Page 136.

<sup>2</sup> Frost, Robert. “The Death of the Hired Man,” l. 118-9, North of Boston (1914).

## 2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF RESIDENCE HALLS

It is no coincidence that these factors are also vitally important in the lives of students and in their academic success. Studies conducted as early as 1935 determined that students living in residence halls were more likely to achieve social and academic success compared with those living in a fraternity or renting space off campus.<sup>3</sup> No doubt, one significant reason for that success, is the sense of community that residence halls create and sustain.

But the history of residence halls dates back to well before 1935. In fact, I understand that student housing dates back to at least the 13<sup>th</sup> century when students flocked to the great medieval universities including the University of Paris, Cambridge, and Oxford. And legend has it that—because of housing shortages—some of these students may have actually lived in tents during the course of their studies.<sup>4</sup>

Fortunately, students at IU Southeast do not have to resort to such extremes.

But our situation today does parallel those early days in certain ways. A record number of high school students—3.34 million—graduated in 2008, and many of those students are looking for the perfect college.<sup>5</sup> Increasingly, that perfect college includes residential housing that feels like home. Students will find that here at this marvelous new housing facility.

Here, they will have opportunities for personal growth, social interaction, and leadership experiences. Here they will be able to interact with faculty and peers, participate in cultural activities, and meet other students from many different places. Here they will

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<sup>3</sup> Rodger, Susan C., and Andrew M. Johnson. "The Impact of Residence Design on Freshman Outcomes: Dormitories Versus Suite-Style Residences." *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 35.3 (2005): 83-99. Page 86.

<sup>4</sup> Information about the scarcity of housing for scholars in the Middle Ages can be found in Pearl Kibre's "Scholarly Privileges: Their Roman Origins and Medieval Expression." *The American Historical Review* 59.3 (April 1954): 543-567.

<sup>5</sup> Ashburn, Elyse. "Student Pool is Expected to Dip and Diversify." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 28 Mar. 2008. <<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i29/29a00102.htm>>. Retrieved 16 June 2008.

become part of a community of learners. Here they will find a home that will nurture their success.

And the apartments themselves are quite magnificent, well designed and well furnished, offering students first-rate amenities.

As important as this new housing is to students, it is equally important to the university as a whole. It demonstrates the vital role Indiana University plays throughout the state as an agent of economic change and prosperity. It represents the university's ability to grow and change in response to student needs. It illustrates that the university's dedication to excellence extends to our commitment to student life.

To borrow from American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, together we are mining the quarry out of which we will build the future.<sup>6</sup>

Today, we are dedicating a step towards that future.

Today, we are celebrating the continued growth of this great university and this fine campus.

Thank you very much.

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<sup>6</sup> Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Introductory Lecture on the Times." Speech delivered at the Masonic Temple, Boston, Massachusetts. December 2, 1841. Reprinted in *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures*. 1849. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1903. Page 259. The original quotation reads: "The Times are the masquerade of the Eternities; trivial to the dull, tokens of noble and majestic agents to the wise; the receptacle in which the Past leaves its history; the quarry out of which the genius of to-day is building up the Future."