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Groundbreaking for the IU School of Dentistry

Clinical Center Expansion

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

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School of Dentistry

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IUPUI

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The late Maynard Hine, who served as dean of the Indiana University School of Dentistry and as the first chancellor of the IUPUI campus, noted in his 1979 article, “A Century of Dental Education in Indiana,” that Thomas Edison invented the first incandescent electric light bulb in 1879—the same year the Indiana Dental College, the predecessor of the IU School of Dentistry, was founded.<sup>1</sup>

In the earliest days of dental education in Indiana, as Chancellor Hine pointed out, dentists had no access to electricity. They relied on natural daylight or kerosene lamps for illumination. They had no access to modern instruments, there was no emphasis on aseptic technique, and general anesthetics were not widely used.<sup>2</sup>

Since that time, dental education has evolved into a modern comprehensive program of scientifically-based professional education, undertaken in an environment in which the

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<sup>1</sup> Maynard Hine, “A century of Dental Education in Indiana: 1879-1979, *IU School of Dentistry Alumni Bulletin*, Spring 1979, IU Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

creation and acquisition of new scientific and clinical knowledge are valued and actively pursued.

Nowhere is this in greater evidence than here in the Indiana University School of Dentistry, the state's only school of Dentistry, one of the oldest dental schools in the nation, and one with a longstanding reputation for excellence.

## 2. THE INDIANA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY

The Indiana Dental College, of course, became the IU School of Dentistry in 1925, during the administration of IU's 10th president, William Lowe Bryan, the greatest academic builder in our university's history. Today, the research, clinical, and educational activities of IU's health science and clinical schools—which include the IU schools of dentistry, medicine, nursing, optometry, social work, public health, and health and rehabilitation science—are one of the major ways Indiana University contributes to the social and economic development of the state of Indiana.

One measure of the impact of these contributions is the fact that the vast majority of dentists practicing in the state of Indiana are alumni of the IU School of Dentistry. Among the 211 students in the school's Class of 2016 were 100 students who graduated with DDS degrees, 77 of whom were Indiana residents. Each year the school produces similar numbers of new dentists—as well as dental hygienists, dental assistants, and other specialists—many of whom continue to practice in the Hoosier state throughout their professional careers.

One indication of the demand for the quality education the school provides is the fact that the school received more than 1,400 applications for 106 spots in the DDS Class of 2020.

The school also has a rich legacy of teaching, research, and service programs that have made major contributions to the promotion of optimal oral health. One major example of this, of course, is the iconic story of the development of Crest Toothpaste. Beginning in 1945, IU dental scientist Joseph Muhler pursued the idea that fluorides were the solution to the problem of tooth decay. Dr. Muhler's team, which included Drs. Harry Day, Grant Van Huysen, and William Nebergall, caught the attention of Procter and Gamble, who began supporting their research in 1949.

In 1956, Crest toothpaste went on sale nationally with the Muhler team's fluoride formula and was later endorsed by the American Dental Association. Dr. Muhler—and many other pioneering teachers and researchers in the school—have made major contributions to contemporary dental science.

The school also continues to expand its impressive international engagement efforts.

In addition to its many service learning programs, the school recently began a new student exchange partnership with Newcastle University in England.

And in 2014, I had the pleasure of signing a university-wide partnership agreement with King Saud University, the leading university in Saudi Arabia while visiting its capital, Riyadh. This partnership was made possible by the impressive and productive partnership the IU School of Dentistry has built over many years with the College of Dentistry at King Saud University. In fact, many senior administrators and faculty members in the dental program there are graduates of the IU School of Dentistry.

### 3. STATE-OF-THE-ART CLINICS

But, of course, the aging infrastructure of the IU School of Dentistry has had an impact on all of its operations—and given that the school provides treatment to more than

30,000 patients a year, its clinical operations have, perhaps, been affected most acutely.

The much-needed expansion for which we break ground today will provide state-of-the-art clinics for the school, which has been operating in facilities that were built in the 1930s, 1960s, and 1970s.

The additional space will increase the school's capacity and make the IU School of Dentistry one of the most technologically current dental schools in the country.

#### 4. SPECIAL THANKS

The expansion for which we break ground today has already attracted enormous support from alumni and friends of the school, including many who are here today. On behalf of Indiana University, let me express our most sincere thanks to all of you for your generous support.

Let me also, once again, express our most grateful thanks to Dr. James Fritts, in whose honor the new clinical center will be named.

As I mentioned earlier, Dr. Fritts, an alumnus of the school, who has had a long and successful practice in his hometown of Rochester, Indiana, has been one of the most passionate supporters of the clinical building project. He and his family have also, over the years, provided generous support for student scholarships in the school.

His generosity will touch the lives of countless students, faculty, staff, and patients—and it will help the IU School of Dentistry to continue to thrive for generations to come.

Dr. Fritts' extraordinarily generous gift reflects his desire to give back to the school that he feels gave so much to him. His gift is also testament to his belief in the value of a

quality dental education that gives students the skills and knowledge they need to succeed, orients them to service to others, and instills in them the values and principles that will guide them in their careers and in their lives.

Dr. Fritts has also inspired many others to lend their support to this construction project—and will, I am certain, inspire still others to support the second phase of renovation of the school’s existing facilities and to support other programs in the school through *For All: The Indiana University Bicentennial Campaign*.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In dedicating the 1962 additions to the School of Dentistry’s facilities, IU’s legendary 11th president, Herman B Wells, proclaimed: “the future holds great promise for the [IU School of Dentistry] and the services it will provide our Hoosier citizens.”<sup>3</sup>

More than half a century later, we can be ever more confident that the future holds great promise for the school and the services it will provide to the citizens of Indianapolis, the state, and the world.

Today’s groundbreaking for the new clinical center that will help the IU School of Dentistry fulfil that promise—through outstanding students trained by world class faculty—truly gives us reason to celebrate.

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<sup>3</sup> Herman B Wells, Remarks delivered at the dedication of the IU School of Dentistry expansion, April 18, 1962, IU Archives.