

1152 words/ 7.9 minutes

Dedication of Paul H. O'Neill SPEA Graduate Center

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President, Indiana University

Paul H. O'Neill Graduate Center

Friday, March 24, 2017

2:00 pm

1. SPEA: SERVICE TO SOCIETY AND THE STATE OF INDIANA

Forty-six years ago this month—on March 27th, 1971—the Board of Trustees endorsed a faculty committee's proposal to establish a new school of public and environmental affairs at Indiana University. As the first to combine public and environmental affairs, the proposed new school would be unlike any other in the nation.

A driving force behind the proposal was the desire for new avenues for better understanding the world and contributing to its improvement.

As the proposal read: "There is growing evidence that throughout the state (and throughout the nation as well,) that people would like to see universities deal more effectively and dispassionately with the needs and problems of modern society. Nearly every major problem confronting modern society," the proposal continued, "cuts across traditional disciplinary and professional boundaries..."¹

Today, as we dedicate the magnificent new Paul H. O'Neill Graduate Center, we celebrate a school that has, over more than four decades, produced groundbreaking interdisciplinary research that has contributed solutions to some of society's most pressing needs—and a school that has produced outstanding graduates who work

¹ Report by a Special Committee on the University and Public Affairs, "A Proposal for a School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University," March 1, 1971, SPEA, Lynton K. Caldwell Papers, IU Archives.

around the state and around the world to identify, define, and help resolve some of our most challenging problems.

2. THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Today, IU's School of Public and Environmental Affairs is a world leader with top ranked programs in nonprofit management, environmental policy, and public finance.

SPEA's graduate program is the nation's highest-ranked professional graduate program in public affairs, and its doctoral programs in public affairs and public policy also rank among the nation's best.

The school remains focused, as well, on its mission of service to the state of Indiana. Sixty-four percent of SPEA's undergraduate students and many of its professional graduate students are state residents. A large number of the school's graduates remain in the state, working to bring public policy and fiscal expertise to bear for the benefit of the citizens of Indiana.

SPEA has become synonymous with excellence at IU and throughout the world, in large part, because of the work of the school's outstanding faculty. Over the years, the school's faculty has included such accomplished scholars as York Willbern and Lynton Keith Caldwell, two of SPEA's principal founders. Professor Caldwell was also the chief architect of the National Environmental Policy Act, often called "the environmental Magna Carta."

As special assistant to then-IU president John Ryan, Charles Bonser was also instrumental in planning SPEA's establishment. He went on to serve as the school's first dean, a position he held for 17 years.

More recently, the late Elinor Ostrom, the recipient of the 2009 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, was a member of the SPEA faculty. All of these scholars and many others—including many who are here today—have contributed to the school's reputation for excellence.

3. RAPID GROWTH; NEW FACILITIES

In the fall of 1972, when SPEA opened, the school occupied one floor of the Poplars Building. The school's enrollment grew rapidly—from just 20 undergraduates in its first year—to nearly 1,000 students in the fall semester of 1974.

SPEA remained in Poplars for its first decade, eventually occupying three full floors.

SPEA's enormous success continued to attract increasing numbers of students, leading to the school's move to the 10th street facility in 1982, a building that also eventually became overcrowded. In 2006, the school's environmental science faculty moved into IU's new multi-disciplinary science building, MSB 2. The expansion and renovation we dedicate today addresses in a major way the space shortage for SPEA, and provides a front door worthy of the number one public affairs graduate program in the country.

This beautiful new Paul H. O'Neill Graduate Center will also help attract the next generation of public and environmental affairs students, who will come to IU to prepare for careers in which they will take on some of society's most difficult challenges.

4. SPECIAL THANKS

There is a long list of people to whom we owe enormous debts of gratitude for helping us reach this moment, and, in thanking them, we must begin with the man for whom this

splendid new graduate center is named: former Secretary of the United States Treasury and IU alumnus, Paul O'Neill.

Secretary O'Neill earned his Master of Public Administration degree at IU in 1966 while a fellow in the National Institute of Public Affairs program.

He has had a remarkable career, serving in the U.S Office of Management and Budget, in the private sector as an executive of both the International Paper Company and Alcoa, and, of course, as Secretary of the Treasury.

Secretary O'Neill has remained closely connected to SPEA, and visits the campus regularly to speak to students and faculty. In 2014, he delivered an outstanding Graduate Commencement address, and on that occasion, he was awarded an honorary IU doctorate.

Earlier that same year, Secretary O'Neill made an extraordinarily generous gift of \$3 million to SPEA, the largest private donation in the school's history. His generous gift helped make this magnificent new facility possible. It also supports the development of the next generation of public sector leaders.

So many others have also lent their enthusiastic and energetic support to the vision we share for the school's future.

For example, David Wang—who served for five years as chair of SPEA's Dean's Advisory Council—made a generous gift of \$1 million to SPEA.

On behalf of Indiana University, I want to again express our deepest thanks to Secretary O'Neill and his wife, Nancy, and David and Cecile Wang for their remarkably generous support.

I also want to commend SPEA Dean Graham and the school's faculty and staff for all they have done to make this center a reality.

I also want to commend Vice President for Capital Planning and Facilities Tom Morrison, as well as the many design and construction professionals, both internal and external, who played major roles in this project.

5. CONCLUSION

In a 1970 paper titled "A Crisis of Will and Rationality," Lynton Keith Caldwell—one of the founders of SPEA, as I have already mentioned—wrote:

"Our country faces a crisis of the mind and spirit, more profound and threatening than the crisis of the environment."

Caldwell argued that this crisis of "intelligence and moral character" was not unique to America, but according to him, it presented a particularly acute challenge in the United States because, unlike most of the world, America possessed the resources of knowledge, technique, and economic strength to solve crises of its own making.

"To surmount this crisis of will and of rationality," Caldwell wrote, "a major effort will be necessary to orient and motivate the coming generation of decision-makers. Nowhere is the need for action greater than in (America's) colleges and universities... (for) it is (there) that the direction of future leadership appears."²

As Indiana University prepares to enter its third century of service, IU and the School of Public and Environmental Affairs remain steadfastly committed to orienting and

² Lynton Keith Caldwell, "A Crisis of Will and Rationality," as reprinted in Caldwell, *Environment as a Focus for Public Policy*, (Texas A&M University Press, 1995). 245-246.

motivating the coming generation of leaders and decision-makers, including those who will study here in SPEA's Paul O'Neill Graduate Center.

All of us look forward to witnessing and celebrating the important and lasting contributions they will make that will strengthen our state, our nation, and our world.

Thank you very much.