

## Presidents Hall Celebration

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President, Indiana University

Presidents Hall

Wednesday, April 10, 2013

4:00 p.m.

### 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Thank you very much for joining us as we celebrate the splendidly renovated and restored Presidents Hall.

The renovation of this room, which was once the library reading room, is the first manifestation of what will be a larger renovation of the historic Old Crescent.

I am delighted that a number of members of the Board of Trustees have joined us today. I'll ask them to wave as I introduce them, and I'll ask you to hold your applause until all are introduced.

- Bill Cast, chair of the Board of Trustees,
- MaryEllen Bishop,
- Phil Eskew,
- Cora Griffin, our student Trustee,
- Tom Reilly,

and

- Pat Shoulders, vice chair of the Trustees.

Would you join me in welcoming them?

## 2. RESTORING ACADEMIC AND STUDENT VITALITY TO THE OLD CRESCENT

In 2010, after a lengthy collaborative process in which many of you here were undoubtedly involved, the Master Plan for IU Bloomington was completed and approved by our Board of Trustees. The Master Plan was—and is—a superb blueprint for the future development of this campus.

One key conclusion that was drawn from the Master Plan was that the way we were using the magnificent iconic buildings that comprise the Old Crescent—the historic core of the campus—did not properly reflect the university’s core missions of education and research. The Board of Aeons, a group of student leaders who advise me on matters related to the campus, also conducted a semester-long study that reached the same conclusion. Students walked through this part of campus, but rarely had any cause to visit any of the buildings.

Only about half of the buildings in the Old Crescent housed academic units. Over a period of several decades, buildings in this historic part of the campus that were built to house libraries, laboratories, classrooms, and study halls were converted for use by administrative units—units that could be situated in less physically and symbolically important central locations.

As I said in my February 2010 State of the University address, “whether we intend it or not, our buildings reflect our values.”

These buildings are of enormous historical importance to IU. They are a core part of the university’s heritage. Thus, it is essential that we make the best possible use of them. The Old Crescent should be among the main academic centers on campus and a vibrant hub of student and academic life and activity, day and night, with all the space and resources in these buildings well used.

Many of these buildings, though, require substantial renovation, and we have made the case to the State Legislature for funds to renovate them and to protect the investment they have already made in them over more than a century. We are very pleased that Indiana Commission for Higher Education has recommended that the Legislature appropriate \$21 million this year specifically for Old Crescent renovations.

In 2010, I also asked the Provost and the Vice President for Capital Projects and Facilities to jointly convene a working group—the Old Crescent Academic Working Group—to develop a long-term plan for the return of the iconic buildings in the Old Crescent to academic purposes. Their excellent report was also of major help in identifying the funding needed to renovate these buildings.

In addition to relocating administrative units and restoring classrooms and learning spaces in the Old Crescent, the working group also recommended that we improve, renovate, or reinstate the “grand spaces” in these buildings to their original purposes.

Presidents Hall is the first of the “grand spaces” in the Old Crescent to be restored to its original grandeur. This space had been very much underused, but it now stands ready to accommodate regular instruction, guest lectures, symposia, and a variety of other functions. Tomorrow, as you may know, Presidents Hall will host a meeting of the Board of Trustees.

This restoration also represents the beginning of the wider restoration of Franklin Hall. As well, renovations of the map room in the Student Building—a large space that was once home to a swimming pool and later served as the Geography Library—renovations in Owen Hall, and a renovation of historic Alumni Hall in the Indiana Memorial Union—are almost complete.

These renovations will help to address the shortage of venues for large events and will help create a more vibrant student environment in the Old Crescent by allowing a wider

variety of special events to be offered in this historic part of the campus at all times of the day and the evening.

### 3. THE PRESIDENTIAL PORTRAIT COLLECTION

But even more than the historic buildings that comprise the Old Crescent, the history of Indiana University is the history of its people.

And so, it is fitting that this magnificent new hall, in this historic part of campus, is now home to the collection of official portraits of Indiana University's presidents.

Presidential portraits have a long and important tradition in American and European higher education.

They capture their subject for posterity and serve as historical documents for the institution.

Assembled here are the official portraits of the 17 previous presidents of the university, brought together for the first time in this magnificent venue. Many of these portraits were previously on display in various locations in the Indiana Memorial Union, but some of them had not previously been on public display in any location.

Bringing these historic portraits together in one location for the first time highlights their importance as works of art that document an important component of Indiana University's history.

It also serves to better highlight the 11 artists who painted these portraits, including the leader of the renowned "Hoosier Group" of Indiana painters, T.C. Steele. Steele is known principally for his landscapes, but portrait commissions were a main source of income for him throughout much of his career. His subjects included not only IU

presidents Andrew Wylie, David Starr Jordan, Joseph Swain, and William Lowe Bryan, but also poet James Whitcomb Riley, several Indiana governors, President Benjamin Harrison, Eli Lilly, and a number of other prominent Hoosiers. T.C Steele's Indianapolis art studio became the first Herron School of Art, and a number of the artists whose work is represented here trained at the Herron School—some of them during Herron's early years as an independent art school, and others in its later incarnation as part of Indiana University.

I believe we are fortunate to have one of the artists with us this afternoon. Rand McKamey earned his BFA from the Herron School of Art and has served as the art preparator and curator of the Indiana Memorial Union for more than 20 years. Rand painted the portrait of IU's 4th president, John Hiram Lathrop, and in lieu of accepting payment for his work, Rand endowed a scholarship in the Herron School of Art and Design.

Would you join me in welcoming Rand?

Above all, however, this collection of the official portraits of IU's 17 previous presidents serves to remind us just how instrumental they were, along with thousands of faculty members, in helping to shape this institution.

Some of them led the university for only a short time. Others, like Andrew Wylie, William Lowe Bryan, and Herman B Wells, led the institution for decades and are Indiana University icons. But all 17 of them left indelible imprints on the university.

These portraits, now exhibited in chronological order for the first time, tell the ever-changing story of leadership at Indiana University. They are a tribute to this university's great history and they remind us of the many achievements that have led us to this moment. And as we attend meetings, seminars, and events in this space, these portraits will remind us of our obligation to this great university.

#### 4. SPECIAL THANKS

I would like to express my gratitude to some of the many people who helped make Presidents Hall possible.

As I mentioned earlier, many faculty, staff, students, and community representatives were part of the Master Planning process that helped set us on this path. We are grateful to all of you, and especially to those of you who served on the Master Plan Working Group and the Master Plan Steering Committee.

Though they have since have graduated, we are grateful for the work of the 2010 members of the Board of Aeon, who, in preparing their excellent report, "Revitalizing the Old Quadrangle," held meetings with key faculty and administrators and gathered the student body perspective through a survey and focus group sessions.

My thanks, also, to those who served on the Old Crescent Academic Working Group, and to former Provost Karen Hanson, and to Tom Morrison, Vice President for Capital Projects and Facilities, who convened and led the working group.

And, of course, because the renovations are also in his purview, Vice President Morrison has played a major role in shaping this project.

And finally, our thanks go to Sherry Rouse, the curator of campus art, for her role in caring for the presidential portrait collection and bringing it to Presidents Hall, and to Kelly Kish, who has handled numerous details related to this project with great competency.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The historic buildings, collegial and scholarly atmosphere, and natural beauty of the Bloomington campus of Indiana University remind us that this is the perfect setting for contemplating life's greatest questions and mysteries.

Now we have, in Presidents Hall, a space that will not only help restore academic and student vitality to this most historic part of the campus, but a space that also celebrates the history and traditions that are the bedrock on which that vitality is built.