

“Climbing Our Way to the Top:
Dedication of the HPER Courtyard Project”

School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation
Courtyard Project Dedication

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President

Indiana University

HPER Auditorium

Thursday, October 6, 2011

3:00 p.m.

1. INTRODUCTION: AN ARDUOUS JOURNEY

Many of you here may remember the story with which I begin this afternoon. In 1992, the School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation sent a team of climbers towards the summit of Mount McKinley to study weight loss and energy expenditure in low-oxygen air. That team of researchers included David Gallahue, Joel Stager, and David Tanner, among others, and over the course of three weeks, they survived some of the worst May weather seen on the mountain. By the time they reached the bottom, the group had a number of close calls with crevasses and were “contend[ing] with hypothermia and frostbitten ears, cheeks, noses, fingers, and toes.”¹

David Gallahue said of this climb that “it prepared [him] for becoming dean of HPER,”² Those in HPER take preparation for administrative service very seriously. This climb and Professor Gallahue’s statement suggest the level of dedication that researchers in the School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation bring to their work.

¹ Klassen, Teri. “Denali Whips Climbers.” *Herald Times Newspaper* 28 May 1992: D1+. Page D1.

² E-mail correspondence with IU Office of the President

Today, we celebrate that level of commitment as we dedicate the HPER Courtyard Project and name the Tony A. Mobley Auditorium. As we do this, we should remember that climb and think about what it still means for the School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation.

2. A HISTORY OF ACHIEVEMENT: A FUTURE OF SERVICE

Though the school was established in 1946—the only school created during the presidency of Herman B Wells—the history of this school dates back at least to the 1890s when IU’s seventh president David Starr Jordan recommended the construction of men’s and women’s gymnasiums. Since those early days, the school has grown from 279 students when it was founded in 1946 to over 2,500 students today and over 20,000 living alumni.

The growth that has taken place over the years continues today. This project, in particular, is emblematic of the spirit of responsible stewardship that continues to allow for physical and academic growth and change at Indiana University.

In my State of the University address last week, I focused, in part, on what it means to be a public university in an era of declining state support. As you know, public universities across the country are facing this question and answering it in a number of different ways. Part of our answer has been operating with greater efficiency across the university, but another vital aspect of our answer must be to reimagine this university for the 21st century.

The Courtyard Project here in HPER does just that, embracing the changing needs of students and faculty by using the space that we have more effectively and efficiently. This project looks beyond what has worked in the past, and instead looks towards what will make this school, and IU as a whole, stronger in the future.

The growth and change in HPER is far more than physical. One of the most significant elements in that evolution is the transformation of the School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation into an accredited school of public health. In June of this year, the IU Board of Trustees unanimously approved this change as well as the creation of a second School of Public Health in Indianapolis. As you all know, HPER is home to some of this nation's finest researchers in public health with particular expertise in health behavior and environmental health sciences, among other areas. This change will enable us to leverage that expertise in competing more effectively for a variety of funding opportunities that are available only to schools of public health.

More important, it will allow us to more effectively serve the state of Indiana. I recall some years ago when U.S. Acting Surgeon General Kenneth Moritsugu gave a lecture at the Whittenberger Auditorium. He said that on his way from the airport to Bloomington, he was surprised that signs at the gas stations included the cost of a pack of cigarettes right beside the cost of gasoline. By a number of different measures, Indiana is considered one of the unhealthiest states in the nation in terms of public health. Studies demonstrate that Indiana ranks poorly among all states in the leading causes of illness and death including heart disease (37th) and cancer (40th) as well as determinants of health including obesity (37th), smoking (45th), and preventable hospitalization (37th).³

With our new Schools of Public Health, we will more effectively be able to mobilize Indiana University expertise to address public health problems that impact the state of Indiana and its citizens. This is the value of Indiana University research to the people of Indiana.

³ For example, see the Indiana State Health Improvement Plan found at <http://www.in.gov/isdh/files/Indiana_State_Health_Plan_FINAL_6_23_11.pdf>. See also the Gallup-Healthways report that outlines several measures of public health in Indiana found at <<http://www.well-beingindex.com/stateCongresDistrictRank.asp>>.

3. A TEAM OF LEADERS LEADERSHIP

As many of you know, this building has a complicated and rich history about which Vice Provost Gieryn will speak in a moment, but here at its heart all along was hidden potential. It has taken the vision of many people to see this potential realized in this wonderful auditorium, office and meeting spaces, state of the art conference rooms, centralized space for advising, and perhaps most important, additional room to expand on the top level.

Leaders like Willard Patty, John Endwright, Anita Aldrich, David Gallahue and others have always kept their gaze well above the horizon looking towards the future of this school. Two additional HPER leaders deserve special recognition in relation to this project. I will borrow the words of David Gallahue who said that “Tony Mobley was the person who did the heavy lifting to get us started up the mountain [on this project, and] . . . Bob Goodman succeeded in reaching the top.”⁴ Let me add how deeply I appreciate Interim Dean Torabi’s leadership of the school during this period of transition from the School of HPER to an accredited school of public health. His energy and focus have helped this project reach fruition.

We are also indebted to the fine work of School of HPER faculty, staff, and administrators who were involved in the planning and oversight of the construction. Our gratitude extends to members of the University Architect’s office and associated staff personnel.

4. CONCLUSION: SHARING THE EXCITEMENT AND CONTINUING THE CLIMB

The climb that these leaders started so many years ago continues today. This new space offers HPER room to grow, but more than that, it offers the opportunity to continue that climb to the top and to help others along the way. As Tony Mobley wrote

⁴ E-mail correspondence with IU Office of the President

on the occasion of HPER's fortieth anniversary, "Share with us the excitement and challenge of our vision for the twenty-first century." ⁵

I would add to that, join us in our continuing ascent.

⁵ Mobley, Tony A. *Celebrate HPER: Fortieth Anniversary School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation Indiana University*. Indiana University Archives. 1985.