

Grand Opening Ceremony
European Union Center of Excellence at Indiana University

Remarks of Michael McRobbie
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
University Club
Indiana University Bloomington
April 10, 2006

1. INTRODUCTION

Over two centuries ago, Immanuel Kant called for a league of nations unified by a single constitution and committed to maintaining perpetual peace. Ironically, Kant argued that this unity was the natural outgrowth of human antagonism. He stated, “[A]fter devastations, revolutions, and even complete exhaustion, [Nature] brings [men] to that which *reason* could have told them at the beginning...to step from the lawless condition of savages into a league of nations” (From Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View, 1784).

Kant’s words articulate the pillars that support Indiana University’s new European Union Center of Excellence: Peace, Community, and Reason. These are lofty ideals indeed for a university center. But what this center can do through its scholarship and research, is to help illuminate all the factors – historical, economic, social and cultural, in all their inter-twined complexity that are transforming what the very word “Europe” means today.

2. PEACE

The struggle to form a peaceful, stable alliance among nations has propelled the steady progress forward towards a unified European Community. National and regional violence challenges that goal and emphasizes the need for peace that will allow prosperity to flourish. This isn't Neville Chamberlain's "peace with honor" or "peace in our time," but Winston Churchill's meaningful peace that grows out of what he called "a United States of Europe."

"What is the sovereign remedy [to the devastation of World War II]?" Churchill asked. "It is to re-create the European Family, or as much of it as we can, and provide it with a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety, and in freedom."

3. COMMUNITY

Churchill's proclamation requires that we re-imagine the European community, acknowledge common citizenship, and revise our ideas about patriotism and nationalism. In fact, the rise of the European Union reflects the decline of the nation-state as a discrete entity. Alexander Kojève, advisor to French President Charles de Gaulle, and one of the leading architects of the original European Economic Community, predicted this change as early as 1945.

In a memorandum to de Gaulle, Kojève wrote, "The period of *national* political realities is over. This is the epoch of Empires, which is to say of *transnational* political unities, but formed by *affiliated* nations."

Kojeve's prediction reveals itself in the very courses we offer here at Indiana University. Classes on the transnational politics of Europe and transnational security issues

prepare students to think on a much larger scale about commerce, law, government regulation, and even infectious disease.

4. EDUCATION [REASON]

This transnational affiliation of nations, this European Union, reflects the global nature of law, public policy, history, commerce, information technology, and education. It almost goes without saying that globalization has transformed the scholarly research community. National boundaries have become virtually meaningless. As scholars travel from conference to conference, sharing information with one another, what remains important are their research areas and their collaborations with others. Cyberscience is truly global and allows scholars to share information instantaneously, establishing and maintaining intellectual affiliations.

5. INDIANA UNIVERSITY AS AN EU CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Here at Indiana University in general, and the European Union Center of Excellence in particular, education is a global endeavor, uniting disparate communities around the world. Just as national boundaries have become increasingly fluid, so too have the disciplinary boundaries that have traditionally separated scholarly communities.

The Center of Excellence brings together scholars from at least nine different departments on two IU campuses to offer intensive language programs, seminars on public policy, and many other tremendous opportunities. Just this week, IUPUI is hosting the Model EU program, one of only four of its kind in the country.

Extending this sense of community and opportunity even further, the Center of Excellence also aims to provide accurate and timely information about the European

Union for those outside of the university community, including teachers in grades K through 12 and civic groups. Indiana University is proud to join the nine other universities that have been selected by the Delegation of the European Commission to be home to a European Union Center of Excellence.

These are stirring and stimulating times to be studying the European Union. The rejection of the referendums on the European Constitution in France and the Netherlands raises the question of whether, as Lincoln might have said, this Union can long endure, or whether this is just a pause, while past gains are more fully consolidated and the path forward more carefully charted.

Either way, we can expect that IU's outstanding scholarship and research in the humanities and the social sciences focused on the European Union through this center will provide deeper understanding of these seismic political forces transforming Europe.

Thank you.