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IU Bloomington Undergraduate Commencement

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President, Indiana University

Memorial Stadium

Saturday, May 7, 2016

10:00 a.m.

1. INTRODUCTION: A TRANSFORMATION UNLIKE ANYTHING HUMANITY HAS EXPERIENCED BEFORE

Trustees, Provost Robel, Mr. Hyneman, Mr. Simic, honored guests, colleagues, and members of the Class of 2016:

German engineer and economist Klaus Schwab, one of *Time* and *Forbes'* 100 Most Influential People in the World, recently wrote that we stand on the brink of a fourth industrial revolution—one that builds upon the digital revolution that has been occurring since the middle of the last century.

“In its scale, scope, and complexity,” Schwab writes, “this transformation will be unlike anything humankind has experienced before. It will,” he continues, “fundamentally alter the way we live, work, and relate to one another.”¹

This new era—marked by social, cultural, and political change of unprecedented scale, scope, and complexity—is the world into which you, the members of the Class of 2016, are graduating.

¹ Klaus Schwab, “The Fourth Industrial Revolution: What it Means, How to Respond,” *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 94, Number 6, December 12, 2015.

Moreover, you are part of the first generation born digital and raised in this new digital age. You have never known a world without the Internet and have never known life without hand-held mobile devices connected to it. This is a world vastly different from the one in which your parents grew up and one that your great grandparents would not even recognize.

It is a world where you may find it necessary to change careers multiple times, as our distinguished Commencement speaker, Jamie Hyneman can attest—who has had careers as a certified dive master, a wilderness survival expert, a boat captain, and a linguist, just to name a few.

During your years at Indiana University, you have received an education that will enable you to remain flexible and creative, open to unexpected directions of thought and action. It will enable you to think analytically, synthesizing information from many different areas to generate solutions to unforeseen and challenging problems. It will encourage you to pursue every avenue to continue your education in both formal and informal settings so as to remain ready for—and responsive to—the change that surrounds you.

2. INDIANA UNIVERSITY: CUSTODIAN OF A PUBLIC TRUST

Indiana's pioneer leaders had the wisdom to recognize that an education of this kind would be essential to the state's development and prosperity. Thus, they called for the establishment of a state university in the state's first constitution. Indiana University was founded on January 20, 1820, and over the last two centuries, has grown to become one of the world's leading modern research universities. For nearly 200 years, it has fueled an engine of prosperity for Indiana and the nation, led the state's international engagement, sparked discoveries that have helped solve the world's problems, and illuminated the boundless possibilities of human imagination and creativity.

IU's original class of twelve young men has become a huge, diverse community of more than 110,000 students from 139 countries around the world. From the original campus with its single classroom building, IU has grown to have an educational reach to every part of the state, from the north to the south, and from the east to the west, through vibrant regional campuses and prospering medical education centers.

Online classes extend the university's reach around the world, and with the nation's third largest alumni body, numbering nearly 700,000, Indiana University has graduates in every corner of the globe.

Indiana University has served, and continues to serve, as the people's university. It takes seriously its obligation to the citizens of the state of Indiana and values its partnerships with the people's elected representatives, who generously help fund and support our education and research missions. As the custodians of a public trust, we strive to ensure that the resources the people of Indiana have provided for this institution are invested wisely on behalf of our current and future students no matter where they come from. We settle for nothing less than providing each and every student with an exceptional educational experience.

We also remain focused on ensuring that our graduates are well prepared for career opportunities in a rapidly changing world, and that they are equipped to take on the most pressing challenges confronting our own communities, large and small. For that reason, we have undertaken the most extensive academic change in the university's history, as IU is transformed into a truly comprehensive university.

New schools are offering new degrees in fields as diverse as international studies, new media, philanthropy, art and design, public health, and engineering. And this is in addition to many long-standing schools with outstanding reputations, and hundreds of world-class programs. But the impetus behind all of this change has been the same: to provide our students with the best, most relevant educational opportunities possible so that they are well-positioned for success upon their graduation in today's global

workforce—and so that they are prepared to meet challenges and opportunities that arise here in Indiana, across the country, and around the world.

3. CELEBRATING THE CLASS OF 2016

You, the members of the Class of 2016 are thus superbly prepared to meet those challenges and opportunities. The extraordinary range of your achievements at Indiana University is testimony to the time you have invested so diligently in your education and to all that you have learned.

The IU Bloomington Class of 2016 is part of a record number of nearly 20,800 graduates of Indiana University across the state—and is the largest graduating class in the history of the Bloomington campus.

Your class—the IU Bloomington class of 2016—includes graduates from 88 different countries, from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and from 87 of Indiana’s 92 counties. Our oldest graduate is 64, our youngest 18, and among this weekend’s graduates are 15 sets of twins.

This extraordinarily accomplished class includes Wells Scholars, two Goldwater Scholars, and five Fulbright Scholars.

Members of the Class of 2016 have led Indiana University’s Culture of Care initiative, an initiative of the greatest importance that has helped to unite the IU community to promote awareness about bystander intervention, drug and alcohol abuse, respect, mental health, and sexual assault.

Other members of the class have helped to raise awareness and funds to support the victims of last month’s devastating earthquake in Ecuador.

A quarter of you have traveled around the world for your studies, embracing the world in all its diversity and not shunning it or closing it off.

And you have raised record amounts—more than \$3.8 million last fall alone—in support of the Riley Hospital for Children through your participation in the IU Dance Marathon, IU's largest student philanthropic event and one of the largest events of its kind at any university in the world.

4. CALLED BY CIRCUMSTANCES TO ADVANCE THE COMMON GOOD

In his recent book, *The Road to Character*, *New York Times* columnist and IU alumnus David Brooks, suggests that one method of organizing one's life—and, indeed, finding one's purpose in life—is to ask “what are my circumstances calling me to do?” This perspective, Brooks writes, “begins with an awareness that in the brief span of your life you have been thrown by fate, by history, by chance... into a specific place with specific problems and needs. Your job,” Brooks writes, “is to figure certain things out: What does this environment need in order to be made whole? What is it that needs repair? What tasks are waiting to be performed?”²

Members of the Class of 2016, in today's constantly changing world, the pressing tasks that are waiting to be performed are extensive, and the problems in need of solutions immense.

Your Indiana University education has enhanced and sharpened your critical thinking and your ability to solve the largest of problems. It has instilled in you the desire to ask—and the capacity to seek answers to questions about globalization, about prosperity and poverty, about energy, technology, and fundamental questions about right and wrong.

² David Brooks, *The Road to Character*, (Random House, 2015), 21-22.

No matter what degree you have earned, you have been equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet these and many other challenges.

As graduates of Indiana University, you have been preparing for years to become the next generation to discover, to understand, and to apply all that you have learned.

May you have the clear-sightedness to perceive the problems that exist wherever you find yourselves, the wisdom to discern the most effective solutions, and the courage to respond when you are called to advance the common good. May you carry on the traditions of excellence that have brought you to this moment.

And may it be said in years to come that it was graduates like you—here and around the world—who confronted and conquered the most difficult challenges of today and gained the respect and gratitude of all.

Congratulations, Class of 2016!