

# “Limitless Vision at Indiana University”

## Optometry Eye Clinic Groundbreaking Ceremony

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President

Indiana University

Optometry Atrium

Optometry Building, IU Bloomington

January 29, 2008

3:00 p.m.

### 1. INTRODUCTION: EXTENDING VISION

In 1968, the president of Rockefeller University Detlev Bronk spoke at the dedication of IU’s new Optometry Building. He cited a number of dramatic scientific breakthroughs that extended the capabilities of human sight: the electron microscope, radar, television, and satellites.

Today we can add exponentially to President Bronk’s list.

If we just consider the internet, MRI technology, and genetic mapping, we can see how scientific breakthroughs in many different areas have come together to change the way we perceive the world around—and within—each of us.

As Dr. Bronk noted in 1968, and we can still see today, science has given us “physiological capabilities [we] could never have achieved by the slow process of evolution.”<sup>1</sup>

Such is the tremendous power of science.

## 2. A SPACE FOR RESEARCH

What adds exponentially to this power is a research environment that encourages scientific innovation and creativity. This is the goal towards which we are striving at Indiana University. Whether they are trying to unlock the mysteries of the human genome or analyzing infant vision, our scientists and scholars should have the space and facilities they need in order to follow their intellectual curiosity wherever it leads. We need only glance at our vehicles and remember the late Dr. Merrill Allen, one of the Optometry School’s first faculty members, to discover where that curiosity might lead. Dr. Allen’s efforts led the car industry to redesign its placement of brake lights in order to reduce the number of auto accidents. Stated simply, good vision saves lives.

We can see similar life-saving efforts across Indiana University. Just to the north of us is Simon Hall, which houses microbiologists, geneticists, molecular biologists, analytical chemists, and biochemists, all working to unlock the mysteries of the human body. Further across campus is the foundation of Multidisciplinary Science Building II, upon which we broke ground last fall, home to neuroscientists, bio- and geochemists, and environmental scientists. Together Indiana University researchers are working towards better lives for all Hoosiers.

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<sup>1</sup> “Optometry Building Dedicated in Ceremonies.” Bloomington *Herald Telephone*. 4 April 1968.

### 3. THE NEXT STEP IN OPTOMETRIC EDUCATION AND RESEARCH AT IU

Today we are celebrating the latest step in Indiana University's pursuit of excellence in research and education that will have a fundamental impact on Hoosier health. This latest step will also greatly enhance IU's opportunity to serve the surrounding community. Provost Hanson will speak to that point in a few minutes. As we break ground on the expansive new Optometry Eye Care Center, we are also essentially breaking ground on a tremendous new research space that will be opening up within the Optometry Building. In a few minutes, Dean Lowther will discuss how that new space will be used.

### 4. VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

Indeed, Dean Lowther's tireless, and yes visionary, leadership has led us to this moment today. He is the latest in the School of Optometry's strong leadership that has served the university as a whole and provides a model for diversity across campus. For examples, we need only look to Vice Provost Sarita Soni, who helped establish and served as Co-Director of the Borish Center for Ophthalmic Research, and Vice President Ed Marshall, who previously served as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Student Administration at the School of Optometry.

Such strong leadership has been a hallmark of IU's School of Optometry since its founding.

### 5. CONCLUSION: THE ENERGY OF CHANGE

In closing, I would like to return to that earlier dedication ceremony and one of IU's earliest leaders of optometric research. In 1968, Division of Optometry Director Henry

Hofstetter wrote of IU's new Optometry Building in his annual letter to the optometrists of Indiana.

"[I]f any one of us has an idea," he wrote, "an inspiration, or a question, it can be pursued immediately, in the laboratory, in the clinic, in a workshop, in a darkroom, in the library, in an office, in the lounge, or even in the hamburger place across the street. It is a most stimulating environment, one that is producing great advances for the profession."<sup>2</sup>

Hofstetter captures the intellectual excitement and energy generated by facilities that foster uninhibited scientific collaboration. We celebrate such excitement and energy today as we break ground today on a project that will enhance education and research at IU and serve the broader Bloomington and Monroe County communities.

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<sup>2</sup> Goss, David A. "History of the Indiana University Division of Optometry." *Indiana Journal of Optometry* 6.2 (Fall 2003): 55.