"Cultivating Achievement, Success and Excellence at Indiana University"

Summer Scholars Institute Closing Luncheon

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie
President
Indiana University
Frangipani Room, IMU
Friday, August 1, 2008
11:30 a.m.

1. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am delighted to be here this afternoon to help you conclude the second Summer Scholars Institute. I understand that joining us today are faculty, staff, and students who are vital to the success of this institute. We should also take a moment to offer a special welcome to parents who have joined us to celebrate their children's achievements. For many students the summer is a time of relaxation, but not for students participating in this vigorous research program. Your family can take great pride in your achievements even as they anticipate your future accomplishments.

2. THE NATIONAL NEED FOR STEM EDUCATION

Two years ago, the Spellings' Commission on the Future of Higher Education released a report described an impending crisis in math and science education in the United States. Just a year later, the National Academies echoed that sentiment explaining that this educational crisis puts our whole nation at risk.

If we consider the vital importance of technical expertise rooted in scientific and mathematical literacy, the magnitude of this crisis becomes clearer. The cars we drive, the elevators we ride in, even the microphone I am speaking into right now trace their very existence to highly skilled people whose interest in science and mathematics led them to discovery, innovation, and creation. Our 21st century world requires a level of expertise unimaginable to people a century ago, decades before the first computer was invented, before television, and before radio. In our increasingly global and knowledge-based economy, education is key.

For a variety of complicated reasons, the crisis of education I mentioned earlier disproportionately affects underrepresented minority students.

3. HBCU / STEM INITIATIVE

In response to this crisis, Indiana University has partnered with eleven historically black colleges and universities to provide opportunities for students and faculty members. Our partnership also extends the university's commitment to diversity and equity for our faculty, students, and staff.

We call this program the STEM Initiative where STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. It aims to provide students with STEM research opportunities, increase access to graduate education, encourage faculty collaborations, and generate faculty relationships that create additional educational and research opportunities.

3.1 THE SUMMER SCHOLARS INSTITUTE

The Summer Scholars Institute is part of this broad-ranging and visionary initiative. Faculty members in Bloomington, at IUPUI and in the School of Medicine have opened

their labs, integrating visiting students into their research programs. My wife Laurie had the good fortune to visit several of those labs just last month. She was greatly impressed by visiting students' genuine engagement in their research and their strong sense of the importance of their experience here at IU.

In its first year, eleven students participated in the program. I understand that this year, the number of students has doubled to 22, including 4 students who are returning for their second year. That these students are returning for additional experience offers testimony to the strength of the program and to the extraordinary quality of the students' work.

3.1.1 JARRETT DAVID'S STORY

Jarrett David is one such student who has worked with Professor Kay Connelly in the Department of Computer Science here in Bloomington over the past two summers. Dr. Connelly said that during his first year Jarrett did a great job designing the prototype of a security system using a platform he had never used before. This year he was part of an NSF project called ETHOS or Ethical Technologies in the Homes of Seniors. Overall, Dr. Connelly describes Jarrett as an incredible undergraduate with a very bright future. As she explains, he was planning to go into industry, but now he is considering graduate school. Might I suggest Indiana University?

3.1.2 GEANEE QUINNEY'S STORY

Geaneé Quinney is another such student. She worked on two major research projects in Professor George Rebec's neurochemistry lab. One project focused on the way certain drugs affect brain processing. The other analyzed the impact of Huntington's disease on brain function. Dr. Rebec describes Geaneé as "a valuable asset to our research effort, who is welcome any time to return to his lab." He continues, "She has

the drive and mentality to pursue graduate study.” Again, might I suggest Indiana University?

3.1.3 TERESA DEMERITTE’S STORY

This is Teresa Demeritte’s first year with the program, but like so many of you, she has applied her energy, drive, and intelligence to her efforts in Professor James Klaunig’s pharmacology and toxicology lab at the IU School of Medicine. Dr. Klaunig said he expected Teresa to come, do the research, and hopefully get something out of it. By Teresa’s second day in his lab, she had made a connection between his work on antioxidants and cancer and the work of one of her mentors at Jackson State who studied the medicinal properties of a particular Nigerian plant. She orchestrated an introduction, which has grown into a productive faculty research collaboration. Teresa’s own summer research reflects this collaboration as she has studied the antioxidant and cancer-fighting properties of that same plant.

4. CONCLUSION

The experiences of these three students tell a much larger story. That story started many decades ago at Indiana University when Herman B Wells helped integrate this campus and the city of Bloomington. That story continues today in the form of this historic partnership among twelve different colleges and universities.

That story continues in the individuals who have made this program work so well. Jeff White, David Daleke, Sherry Queener, and David Malik have made tremendous efforts organizing the program on both the Bloomington and IUPUI campuses. And a special thanks also goes to Jack Schmit for his tireless efforts as well. Would you please join me in thanking each of them?

Indiana University faculty also deserve our special thanks for opening their laboratories and sharing their expertise with visiting students. Would you all join me in thanking our faculty for their generosity and support?

And thank you all for helping Indiana University cultivate a culture of achievement, success, and excellence. Together we are building a future of innovation, opportunity, and promise.

Congratulations to our Summer Scholars and best of luck to each of you.