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International Citizen of the Year Award

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President

Indiana University

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8:30 p.m.

1. THANKS AND INTRODUCTIONS

Thank you very much. I really am deeply honored to receive this award tonight from the International Center. I would like to thank most gratefully the Board of the International Center and its Chair, Bob Postlethwait, and the Center's President and CEO Diane Thomas and all her staff, for this wonderful honor. I have greatly admired all that the International Center has done over many years to make Indiana a more welcoming state to those of who have come from foreign shores.

And I would also like to thank Jim Morris and all the highly distinguished Honorary Co-Chairs, as well as Amy Conrad Warner and Marsha Stone for making tonight such a memorable event. My thanks too, to the legendary Quinn Buckner for serving as master of ceremonies for this event.

I am grateful as well to the various IU vice presidents, chancellors, and deans for being here tonight. This is my 20th year at IU, and the university's present senior management team is, without doubt, the strongest and most talented in all my years here, and I am sure bears comparison with the best ever at IU.

I am also grateful that IU Trustees MaryEllen Bishop, Phil Eskew, Andy Mohr, Melanie Walker, and Anna Williams could all be here. Actually, with Jim and Quinn, that easily makes a quorum.

There are so many others here tonight who I would like to recognize, but hopefully it will suffice for me to thank everyone for coming tonight. I really do appreciate it very much.

But I hope you will forgive me for singling out just a couple.

I am honored that the Consul General for Australia in Chicago, Michael Wood, is here.

I am also honored by the presence of Senator Richard Lugar, who, along with his fellow IU faculty member, Lee Hamilton, are two of this country's greatest international statesmen.

And I am delighted that my beloved wife, Laurie, could be here with five of our six children—our Australian children, Josephine, Lucien, and Arabella, who, like me, are now also proud American citizens; and our American children, Margaret and Carol, who is here with her fiancé, Ryan.

Given the Consul General is here, maybe he could make Margaret and Carol Australian citizens too, so we have dual citizenship parity among siblings.

## 2. INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES

Much of my career has been spent working internationally, and it is a career that has now spanned two continents. Thus, this award is particularly meaningful to me.

At Indiana University, we are proud of the leading role we play in the state's and America's international engagement. Nearly every great civilization of the world,

almost without exception, has had institutions whose role is to preserve the knowledge and culture of those civilizations, to transmit it, and to add to it. These we know as universities. They are among the most ancient of human institutions, with the first of them of which we have records, founded over 25 centuries ago.

They are also among the most enduring of human institutions—one of the first, Nalanda University in India, was founded in the 6th century BCE, and existed for 17 centuries; Plato's legendary Academy in Athens lasted for nine. And of universities that exist today, the oldest of these in Europe, the University of Bologna—a long standing partner of IU, where I had the honor of visiting earlier this year—was founded in the 11th century. The University of al-Qarawiyyin in Morocco is even older, having been founded in the 9th century. Some will, in fact, claim universities are the oldest continuous human institutions in existence, other than the Catholic Church. But the Chinese will claim that some of their present universities are even older, and can trace their continuous lineage back to the imperial institution of higher learning established in the 2nd century BCE.

Universities have always been truly international institutions, open to the world and attracting the very best and most able from every country. The pages of the histories of all great universities of the past are the record of this, with names from every part of the then known world.

And the same is true today of the acclaimed American research universities like Indiana University, who grew to prominence in the wake of the devastation of the great European and German universities following World War II.

It is to the leading American research universities that the mantle of renown and openness to the world of the legendary ancient institutions of learning has now fallen. These are the institutions who now lead the world in research and in scholarship and who attract faculty from all over the globe. I speak as one of these faculty.

Universities are the guardians of the very core of centuries of knowledge and of the culture of our civilization. The great American research institutions are now at their vanguard. They are the institutions that safeguard and transmit this knowledge and culture from one generation to the next across centuries, remaining a constant through wars, strife, and dramatic social and economic upheaval. They are a beacon of hope and renewal in the darkest times and, through discovery and innovation, play a vital role in bringing the best of times through prosperity and security. They are, in short, central to the persistence and preservation of our civilization.

So seen in this context, to have the privilege, as I have had for nearly 10 years now, of leading such an institution, is both an extraordinary honor and a formidable responsibility. And to have come to this position as the first in my family to have studied at college, and to have come from another country from modest origins, is without any sentimentality or exaggeration, truly the American dream.

But I share these origins with hundreds of other IU faculty, over 20 percent of whom are foreign born, underscoring once again, how American universities derive their strength from the best talent in the world. And I share these origins with over 25 percent of IU students who are first generation students, many from low-income and minority backgrounds, underscoring the essential role that flagship public universities like IU play in the democratization of American higher education.

Indiana University is one of the world's great international universities. This is the heritage bequeathed to it by visionary IU leaders like David Starr Jordan, William Lowe Bryan, Herman B Wells, and John Ryan. It is also a heritage confirmed and sustained over many decades by successive IU Boards of Trustees, who have, maybe, the weightiest task of all, since it is they who must ultimately make decisions for the citizens of the state of Indiana, in whose name they hold the university in trust. Those of us at IU have inherited the responsibility of preserving and strengthening their work.

We live in increasingly difficult times, when strident voices would shut us off from the rest of the world just at a time when the need to understand it, engage with it, is at its most acute and urgent. Wars, both trade and real, crises, and the very collapse of civilizations and cultures can be the outcomes of devastating miscalculations based on international ignorance and xenophobic stereotypes. American universities must play a central role in combatting this. There are probably no American institutions more widely admired and respected internationally than its great research universities, as has been repeatedly confirmed to me in my visits as IU president to 35 countries around the globe.

Of all that comprises an IU education, international literacy and experience ranks at the very top. The world in which our students will live will require more, not less knowledge about the world. To do this, we must ensure that IU is a center for the world's leading scholars and practitioners in global and international studies, as well as ensuring we have internationally engaged faculty.

In my years as IU president, we have sought to provide this in seven ways.

- By requiring a mandatory international component for every student as part of their IU education.
- Through a major increase in the number of our students who study abroad. Over the last 10 years we have seen nearly a doubling in the number of IU students who study abroad—it has become one of the highest in the nation, and now about a third of IU Bloomington students have studied abroad by the time they have graduated.
- Through welcoming a large and diverse international student body who now come from over 150 countries. They bring the world to IU. And when they return to their home countries, they become, for the rest of their lives, passionate alumni and staunchly pro-American. We now have around 50 international chapters of IU's Alumni Association, the latest of which I had the honor of inaugurating in Mexico City just a few weeks ago.

- By building strong and active partnerships with some of the best foreign universities in the world. As you heard earlier, we have around 200 of these.
- By building on IU's formidable resources in language study—we teach over 70 foreign languages, more than any other university in the country—and in area studies, to become one of the nation's pre-eminent centers of research and scholarship in foreign and international affairs. This we are rapidly achieving through our new School of Global and International Studies.
- By supporting and encouraging our faculty from all disciplines in engaging internationally.
- Through the establishment of IU Global Gateway centers to help focus and concentrate our activities in key regions of the world. We have these now in Beijing, Berlin, and New Delhi, and others will follow in the next few years. Soon, in Herman Wells' words, the sun will never set on IU.

I am honored to be the first IU president to receive this award from the International Center and I thank the Center again with great sincerity. But in accepting it, I also do so on behalf of those of my predecessors whose vision built IU's international heritage, all of those at IU now and in the past who have worked so hard to make it a reality, and to successive Boards of Trustees who have sustained and safeguarded this vision over more than a century.

Thank you very much.