

“A Century of Progress: IU School of Education”

School of Education 100th Anniversary Celebration

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President

Indiana University

Wright Education Building Atrium

IU Bloomington

Monday, November 17, 2008

4:00 p.m.

1. INTRODUCTION: EDUCATION AND MEMORIES

On behalf of Indiana University, I would like to thank Deborah Meier for the gift of her papers.

In his masterwork *The Brothers Karamazov*, Feodor Dostoyevsky wrote, “You are told a lot about your education, but some beautiful, sacred memory, preserved since childhood, is perhaps the best education of all.”¹

Dostoyevsky makes a distinction between formal education and the most important memories of childhood, but I would like to suggest that no matter how old we are, some of our most powerful and perhaps most sacred memories are memories of formal education. We remember our teachers who cared enough about us and our future to take time to explain both the simplest and the most complicated of subjects. We remember those people who—through education—made a profound difference in our

¹ Dostoyevsky, Feodor. *The Brothers Karamazov*. 1879. Trans. Constance Garnett. (Volume 2, section 3, epilogue). Accessed 14 Nov. 2008. <<http://www.friends-partners.org/oldfriends/literature/brothers.html>>.

lives. Taken collectively, those memories only begin to suggest the immeasurable impact that teachers at every level have within and upon our culture.

2. IU SCHOOL OF EDUCATION: A VERY BRIEF HISTORY

Today's ceremony offers each of us an opportunity to reflect on the magnitude of that impact here at Indiana University. Since 1851, when the first class of didactics was taught to thirty-four students, IU's teacher training and educational research programs evolved into the Department of Pedagogy in 1896, the Department of Education in 1904, and finally the School of Education in 1908, a century ago.² That first class of 34 has grown into a cohort of 3,719 students in Bloomington and Indianapolis, and well over 8,000 students enrolled across our eight campuses.

2.1 ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the years, alumni of the School of Education have distinguished themselves time and again. In the last few weeks alone, two School of Education graduates—one from IU Bloomington and another from IUPUI—received the Milken Educator Award, considered the “Oscar of Teaching.” On another level, Indiana University has been described as the “mother of college presidents,” and the School of Education is home to around half of the college presidents and chancellors who have graduated from IU.³ More than 100 School of Ed alums have gone on to lead colleges across the country and around the world.

² Brown, Doris M. “100-Year Story of Progress—The I.U. School of Education.” *The Indiana Daily Student* (July 12, 1951): 3.

³ For additional information, see “Indiana University—Mother of College Presidents.” *Indiana University Alumni Quarterly* (1922): pages 46-49 and Pinede, Nadine F.M. “The Higher Education President: HESA Graduates Develop Lifelong Leadership Skills.” *Chalkboard* (Fall/Winter 2001): pages 10-14.

2.2 FACULTY BRIDGE THEORY AND PRACTICE

These kinds of accomplishments would have been impossible without the School of Education's outstanding faculty, which, in its early days, consisted just of Daniel Read, a lone professor of didactics.⁴ That faculty now includes hundreds of members, who not only train tomorrow's teachers but also specialize in counseling and educational psychology, educational leadership and policy studies, and many other areas.

Their research bridges theory and practice in Bloomington and Indianapolis, across the state, and around the world. Indeed, one measure of the tremendous strength of the School of Education's research programs is the school's national rankings in so many areas, including higher education administration, counseling and personnel services, as well as an overall ranking in the top twenty nationally.

3. LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

These rankings also speak to the strength of the School of Education's partnerships across the state. Whether we are looking at the partnership between IU faculty and the Gary school system, the Professional Development School Writing Project at IUPUI, the Decatur Project, which focuses on educational reform in Decatur Township Schools, or any other number of programs across the state, we see projects that extend the reach of the School of Education into local school systems. Of course, those efforts are also making a tremendous difference right here in Bloomington, pairing faculty expertise with community needs.

Indeed, the first such outreach efforts actually began well over a century ago when, in 1891, the then Department of Pedagogy first offered extension courses in Louisville and

⁴ Brown, page 3.

Evansville.⁵ This school has a great history of reaching long distances to expand educational opportunities.

4. GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

Of course, those efforts reach well beyond the boundaries of Indiana and are an important part of Indiana University's great traditions of international education and engagement. I understand that just two weeks ago, Dean Gonzalez led an IU delegation to China to explore issues in Chinese higher education policy and equity.⁶ Like my own recent visit to Korea and China, Dean Gonzalez' visit builds on the longstanding educational partnership between institutions of higher education in China and Indiana University that dates back to 1909. It was then, just a year after the School of Education was established, that the first Chinese student graduated from IU.

The School of Education has reached out to many other places as well, including Afghanistan, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, and at least a dozen other countries, to help build educational infrastructure and strengthen teacher training. I recently learned about the professionalism and talent of a School of Education student teacher training in Sydney, Australia, through the Cultural Immersion Program. She is one of many students who become cultural ambassadors for Indiana University as they prepare for the global challenges of the twenty-first century.

5. CONCLUSION: CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

As we celebrate the centennial of IU's School of Education, we should applaud the achievements of our faculty and students. We should also cast our gaze both near and

⁵ Brown, page 3.

⁶ "Dean's Delegation in China to Shore up Partnerships for IU School of Education." Press Release, Indiana University. Posted October 27, 2008. <<http://newsinfo.iu.edu/news/page/normal/91113.html>>.

far to see the places that our School of Education, its teachers, and students have made a difference in our world. But we should not overlook the challenges that we continue to face.

Recent reports released by the National Academies and the Spellings' Commission both outline what is fair to call an impending crisis in math and science education that threatens to put the entire nation at risk.

This is a challenge that requires innovation, flexibility, and partnership. It requires us to reimagine what education means in the 21st century. It requires the hope and optimism that are at the heart of the very best education.

And this is just the sort of challenge that the IU School of Education has been responding to over its century of progress.

Congratulations on reaching this milestone, and we all look forward to a second century that exceeds the first in accomplishment, scholarship, and leadership.

Thank you very much.