

A DECADE *of* LEADERSHIP

With the help and support of a multitude of IU colleagues, President **Michael A. McRobbie** has built facilities, opened new schools, and established plans for prosperity into the university's third century.

BY **MIKE WRIGHT**

IU President Michael A. McRobbie's office in Bryan Hall is filled with family photos, memorabilia, awards, gifts, and personal effects, such as the Swiss Army knife he has kept on a desk for decades.

MARC LEBRYK



Accepting congratulations after he was named president of Indiana University, Michael A. McRobbie remarked, ***“We’ve got a lot of work to do.”***

Reminded of that in an interview in Bryan Hall earlier this year, McRobbie chuckled and said, ***“We still do.”***

July 1 will mark a full decade since McRobbie took office. He started at a full sprint and hasn’t slowed down since. During the past 10 years, IU has, among other accomplishments, experienced a major building boom; restructured the academic enterprise, including opening seven new schools of study; boosted its international engagement and profile; strengthened the arts and humanities; launched the university’s largest fundraising campaign ever; and set ambitious goals to be completed by IU’s bicentennial in 2020.

And while he is captain of the ship, McRobbie makes it clear that the accomplishments of the university over the decade are the work of many. From faculty and staff to deans and vice presidents, hundreds have shared in the advancement of IU.

“This is not a one-man show,” McRobbie says. “I’ve been blessed to have had incredible colleagues. The people in IT (where McRobbie started his IU career in 1997), many of whom are still there, were just outstanding. The collections of vice presidents and deans are the strongest management team this institution has ever had. Then the staff, dozens of people who have all contributed to the successes we’ve had. It’s an out-



IU President Michael A. McRobbie shares a story with the author during an interview in January.

MARC LEBRYK

standing team.”

Indeed, IU has changed significantly over the last 10 years, but when the presidential search occurred in 2006, IU was in need of a dynamic leader. The trustees were looking for someone who could think strategically to set the course of progress and who could implement all that was sure to be a plate overflowing with initiatives.

“We wanted someone who had a strategic vision for where IU needed to be in the 21st century,” says IU Trustee Pat Shoulders, BA’75, JD’78. “I think one of the things that most recommended him for the job was that he had authored a strategic plan for our IT area and had implemented it. He had demonstrated the ability not only to think but to act.”

McRobbie had been at IU for 10 years already, brought here from his native Australia by IU President Myles Brand to ramp up the university’s information technology area. McRobbie was given additional duties as vice president for research in 2003 and promoted again in January 2006 to interim provost of the Bloomington campus.

Faculty members have their own criteria for what they seek in a leader. Rachel Applegate, associate professor of library and information science and co-chair of the University Faculty Council, says her ideal combination of a president includes a strategic long-term vision and an appreciation for all of the small and large parts of the enterprise.

“A university president should make [faculty] proud,” she says. “As a faculty leader, I want a president who truly believes in a partnership with faculty.”

Applegate says McRobbie has many strengths, including diligence about faculty consultation. Carolyn Calloway-Thomas, associate professor of communication and culture and a member of the faculty advisory group in the 2006 presidential search, agrees with Applegate.

“I was looking for a president who was mindful of the central importance of compelling ideas in transforming Indiana University,” says Calloway-Thomas, PhD’76. “Because we live in a highly technologized world, and because global competition is keen, I also wanted a president who would richly study where IU was and where it needed to go to help make the world a far better place.”

Calloway-Thomas says she has been struck again and again by McRobbie’s keen understanding of the role of powerful ideas in driving IU forward.

“He is a steadfast visionary and has done some truly path-breaking things, including creating several new, robust schools, all with an eye toward promoting excellence,” she says. “Such accomplishments help make the case that IU has improved a great deal during President McRobbie’s leadership.”

Sue Hays Talbot, BS’66, MS’71, EdD’92, was an IU trustee in 2006 and headed the search committee that ultimately recommended McRobbie for the job. She says that among his unique qualifications was a business background from his IT work in Australia. Talbot had high expectations for the McRobbie presidency, and she says those have been fulfilled.

“He has absolutely surpassed anything we thought he would do,” Talbot says. “He emphasized classroom space, because we haven’t had adequate space for many years. One of his well thought-out plans to be our president was to make sure we were fiscally conscious about our ability to fund the university. I don’t think you can emphasize that enough, and Michael has been careful to ride herd on that.”

The bottom line was that in 2006–07, IU found a leader ready to move and move quickly and decisively.

Building Opportunities

As IU searched for a new president, Shoulders noted that the university had come through a period of stagnation, a perception “that we had hit the pause button.” Having worked at IU for a decade, McRobbie also saw IU as an underperforming institution when he assumed leadership in 2007.

“By that, I mean that a lot of our competitive institutions in the Big Ten had moved ahead of us in a variety of ways,” he says. “In many ways, really, we had stood still for a long time. The classic example of that was buildings—that when we opened Simon Hall, it was the first new science building that had been opened on the Bloomington campus since Geology in 1969.

“But if you went to Michigan, Ohio State, and other major Big Ten institutions, they had put a huge amount of resources into building facilities for research and education, with a substantial emphasis on health and life sciences.”

Another example was student living quarters at IUB. IU, McRobbie notes, was the last school in the conference to renovate and upgrade student residences. In his inaugura-



“One of the most important things we’ve done has been the **academic restructuring of Indiana University.**”

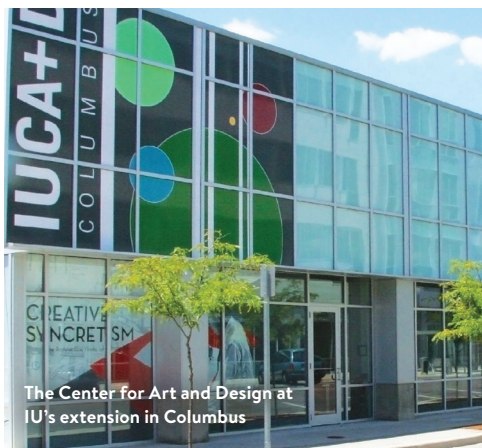
— Michael McRobbie



State of the Art

IU's strength in the arts is supported by investments in facilities, students, scholarships, and faculty, including:

- Attracting and retaining top scholars whose pursuits range from language and literature to the fine and performing arts.
- Renewal of IU's New Frontiers in the Arts and Humanities seed-funding program. Entering its second decade, the program has awarded more than \$10 million to 483 faculty members since 2005.
- The new School of Art and Design, approved by the trustees in 2015.
- The IU Center for Art and Design in Columbus (pictured below) that has allowed IU students, faculty, and visitors to take part in the city's acclaimed architectural, artistic, and cultural heritage.
- Renovations and improvements to the Musical Arts Center and the IU Auditorium, which celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2016.
- The seventh year of the IU Cinema, which has hosted acclaimed actors, including Meryl Streep, LHD'14, and Kevin Kline, BA'70, LHD'14.
- The newly renamed Sidney and Lois Eskenazi Museum of Art, which is preparing to undergo major renovations to modernize the building, expand the gallery and event space, and enhance its educational programming.
- Completing a new outdoor amphitheater in the woods behind Bryan House.



tion speech, McRobbie pledged to renovate and upgrade all dorms on the campus.

"This was met with some skepticism in some quarters, but by the bicentennial we will have completed the task," he says. "We're over 75 percent finished now."

McRobbie also announced at his inauguration an ambitious \$1 billion building plan to renovate, upgrade, repair, and construct the kinds of facilities needed on IU's campuses to meet the academic and research missions.

The IU website listing building projects completed or under way shows 150 projects over the last 10 years, and nearly half of those are considered major construction university-wide. The building boom of the decade continued, despite one of the major challenges of McRobbie's presidency—the recession that started in 2008.

"[The recession] did slow us down in some ways, and we actually saw a budget cut during that period," he says. "But thankfully, we had foreseen what was coming and very early on started to take action to deal with those problems. Consequently, I think we went into the full weight of the recession in much better shape than many institutions."

Among other actions during the recession and state budget cuts, IU reduced its ongoing base budget by \$36 million through increased efficiencies; generated \$40 million in savings through software licensing agreements; and offered an early retirement plan to save \$10 million.

While IU got leaner in some ways, McRobbie says he had two critical priorities during the economic downturn: keep building and keep hiring. With the recession and its effects, prices of construction came down, in some cases 40 percent under estimates. And some of the best schools in the country stopped hiring faculty.

"So it was an incredible time to keep building, and we did," he says. "And it really provided us with marvelous opportunities which we took advantage of to hire new faculty. Those were two things that were important to us, but it was a difficult time to get through."

Talbot adds, "His aspiration was to build, build, build, and that's turned out to be a good thing."

New Needs, New Schools

The academic structure of the university was another area that had not kept pace, McRobbie says, citing journalism as one example. In the digital age, media delivery is quite different from earlier days of journalism, and the academic structure of the program did not reflect that.

"Those are the kinds of issues where the academic standing of the student body had fallen to an extent that we were in many places seen as third in the state to Purdue and Ball State, no disrespect to either of them," McRobbie says. "But I really thought that Indiana University, as a major AAU research institution, should just have a much higher standing than that, especially as the flagship namesake institution of the state of Indiana."

Thus, the creation of the Media School, which merged journalism, telecommunications, and film studies. The school offers degrees in those fields as well as other digital-age pursuits.

Carley Lanich, a junior majoring in journalism and political science from Indianapolis, says she heard of IU's journalism

excellence and its Ernie Pyle Scholars program while in high school. She enrolled in the former School of Journalism and is studying in Okinawa, Japan, this summer for course credit. Noting that the Media School is still in its infancy, Lanich sees big strides coming in the future.

"I think it's very important for all journalists, writers included, to gain at least a basic level of digital journalism proficiency, and I think the Media School is IU's response to preparing students for these changes in the industry," she says.

The Media School wasn't the only change in the university's academic structure. In the past decade, the university has established six other new schools—Public Health–Bloomington; Fairbanks School of Public Health–Indianapolis; Global and International Studies; Informatics and Computing; Lilly Family School of Philanthropy; and Art and Design. Also, IU established for the first time a program in intelligent systems engineering that welcomed its first class in the fall 2016.

"One of the most important things we've done has been the academic restructuring of Indiana University," McRobbie says. "I think historically that will be seen as a watershed in the history of the institution."

International IU

IU's legendary president, Herman B Wells, BS'24, MA'27, LLD'62, stated in his autobiography, *Being Lucky*, "Truly, the sun never sets on the work of a great university." McRobbie says he's always loved that quote, and as president he has made it a high priority to build on Wells's legacy of internationalization.

As he began his presidency, McRobbie said he wanted to increase the number of IU students who study abroad during their time at the university. He sought scholarship assistance to support study abroad initiatives. He also wanted to strengthen and expand IU's academic and research ties abroad as well as help establish significant Alumni Association chapters in foreign countries. A tireless traveler, McRobbie has made numerous trips abroad to personally support his international goals.

"I have to say, this is an area where we've achieved well beyond what I thought we could or was possible at the time," he says.

A decade ago, about 2,000 IU students engaged in study abroad programs. Today, McRobbie notes, the figure is up to

about 3,000. He's encouraged with the responses of students.

"I think I've met hundreds of students who have studied abroad, and they've said, to a person, that it was life-changing for them," McRobbie says.

For example, Mila Aharon, a senior peer counselor in IU's office of overseas study, says her experience studying abroad taught her several life lessons, especially about using resources and making difficult decisions. After visiting Rome at age 14, Aharon had a strong desire to "become Italian."

She transferred to IU from Hunter College as a sophomore after discovering that IU was one of the top language schools in the country. She was already fluent in Italian by the time she started college, which gave her a unique experience when she studied in Bologna last year.

"More than anything else, I learned that I don't have to *be* Italian to live happily in Italy," she says. An anthropology and linguistics major, Aharon hasn't decided on a life goal yet, but she does plan to speak Italian whenever possible and learn new languages as well.

Recruiting efforts have helped to build a diverse international student body. In the academic year that just ended, IU hosted just over 12,000 degree-seeking students from foreign countries.

IU also has revamped its partnerships with institutions around the world to focus on areas of importance to IU. Partnerships have been built or strengthened in more than 20 priority areas, including China, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia.

The university had already established a lot of those relationships on paper, but the number that were actually functioning in a meaningful way was pretty small, McRobbie says.

"So we set out to build partnerships with the right kinds of institutions in the right countries for us to focus our resources on the countries important to us, because that's where our students go to

study abroad, where we get students from, and that's where our alums are.

"At the same time, we built chapters of the IU Alumni Association, and in every one of those priority countries we have at least one chapter of the IUAA, and these really are vigorous chapters."

In addition, IU has established gateway centers in China, India, and Europe (based in Germany) to assist in student recruitment, host events, strengthen partnerships, and support visiting researchers. McRobbie says the plan is to set up three or



"We got a two-fer. Laurie [Burns McRobbie] has been probably **our most outstanding first lady in many ways.**"

— Sue Talbot

First Family

Whether attending IU events and performances, hosting visitors, or patronizing the arts, Michael and Laurie McRobbie are likely to be seen at various times and places around IU's eight campuses and around the state.

Top: Michael McRobbie greets IU diver and fellow Australian James Conner, who competed for Australia at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Lower left: Michael and Laurie McRobbie before the Old Oaken Bucket game in 2016.

Lower right: McRobbie's daughter, Arabella, joins Michael and Laurie before the President's Choice film selection at the IU Cinema.



four more of those centers by the bicentennial.

Finally, the establishment of the School of Global and International Studies helped to complete the focus on IU's international programs.

"It has taken what was an enormous strength of the university, but a completely underappreciated one, and brought it together in a way that has gotten national and international attention," McRobbie says. "That's one of the things I'm proudest of."

Art Appreciation

As a major multi-campus public research institution, grounded in the liberal arts and sciences, IU has long recognized that the quality of its culture and the quality of the arts are closely connected (see sidebar, page 26). McRobbie and his wife, Laurie Burns McRobbie, MA'16, are serious patrons of the arts. The IU president also has several works of art by IU students and faculty in his home and office.

Shoulders remarked that he has been pleasantly surprised about McRobbie's interest in and concern for promotion of the arts and humanities.

McRobbie emphasized that it was important to update and add to IU's infrastructure to support the arts and humanities.

Jon Vickers, founding director of the IU Cinema, sees his facility as an example of McRobbie's vision.

Vickers notes that THS Ltd., a highly respected company that blends technology and the dynamics of real-world viewing environments, called the IU Cinema the "best equipped university cinema in the country. After countless filmmakers tell you that their screening experience here was their best ever, you start to realize that we were given such a beautiful and functional gift with this place."

The Buck Stops Here

As Talbot mentioned, fiscal responsibility is essential to all facets of the university. In order to achieve the success desired by the state and to keep attendance affordable to students, philanthropy is a key component to IU's \$3.6 billion budget.

The university, as is the case with most other institutions around the country, is almost in a constant state of campaigning to raise funds for student financial aid, facilities, faculty support, and the "extras" that round out a college education. The current For All Bicentennial campaign, which runs through 2019, seeks to raise \$2.5 billion, the most ambitious fundraising effort in the history of the school. At about \$1.8 billion, at the first of the year, the campaign is slightly ahead of schedule.

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

A major component of the campaign is the money IU matches for gifts to fund student scholarships and endow professorships and chairs. The number of undergraduate scholarships on the Bloomington campus has increased by 50 percent, supported by the matching funds. The original goal for faculty recruitment and retention was 100 professorships and chairs.

"Those are for named professorships, which is a major way one can support the best faculty," McRobbie says. "It was clear about a year ago that we were easily going to make 100, so we've increased the goal to 150, and I think we'll probably make that rather handily.

"Of course, we are immensely grateful to the 200,000 or so people who have given in the present campaign. The generosity of our alumni enables the university to do things that we could not do otherwise."

To Your Health

IU has partnered with IU Health to establish health centers around the state, including the \$1 billion IU Health Hospital in Indianapolis and a new Multi-Institutional Academic Health Sci-



"He had demonstrated the ability not only to think but to act."

— Pat Shoulders

IU's Building Boom

Through the recession years, IU found a way to continue its building program. Reduced construction prices led to bargains for many of the new facilities on IU campuses. This is a partial list of projects completed recently or under way. For the full list, go to construction.iu.edu.

IU Building Projects Completed Since 2016

PROJECT	CAMPUS	COMPLETION
Student Activities and Events Center	IU East	April 2016
IU Natatorium renovation	IUPUI	May 2016
Jacobs School of Music MAC addition	IUB	May 2016
Franklin Hall renovation	IUB	June 2016
Hodge Hall Phase II	IUB	July 2016
North Hall	IUPUI	August 2016
Simon Skjodt Assembly Hall renovation	IUB	October 2016
SPEA renovation and expansion	IUB	January 2017
Arts and Sciences building	IUN	April 2017

IU Building Projects Under Way

PROJECT	CAMPUS	COMPLETION
Read Hall renovation Phase II	IUB	July 2017
Wells Quad housing renovation	IUB	July 2017
Luddy Hall (Informatics and Computing)	IUB	November 2017
Marching Hundred Hall	IUB	December 2017
Administration Building/Riverside Hall	IUSB	December 2017
Kelley School of Business addition	IUB	December 2017
Dental School addition	IUPUI	January 2018
Indiana Memorial Union renovation	IUB	January 2018
IU School of Medicine/Evansville		March 2018
Forest Quad renovation	IUB	June 2018
Eskenazi Museum of Art renovation	IUB	July 2018
Housing Lodge	IUS	July 2018
Memorial Stadium renovation	IUB	August 2018
Old Crescent renovation Phase II	IUB	August 2018



The Many Jobs of a President

Whether it's working in the office, presiding over ceremonies and events, fundraising, or generally promoting the university, a president's work is multi-faceted.

Honoring Faculty
Celebration of distinguished teaching recipients



Hosting International Visitors
Dr. Rui Maria de Araújo, prime minister of Timor-Leste

Greeting Alumni
Board of Aeons 95th anniversary reception



Breaking Ground
IUPUI Chancellor Nasser Paydar, right, with Dr. James Fritts and McRobbie at the IU School of Dentistry expansion ground-breaking

Attending Student Events
McRobbie greets the crowd at the Little 500 men's race



Creating International Partnerships
Outside the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland

Leading Graduation
Commencement ceremony at IUB



ence Education and Research campus in Evansville, scheduled for completion in 2018.

Now, the long-anticipated IU Health Regional Academic Health Center on the Bloomington campus is scheduled to break ground in late summer. The health campus will include a new IU Health Bloomington Hospital. Completion is slated for the bicentennial year of 2020.

The new facilities in Bloomington, located at the current site of the driving range of the IU Golf Course, will bring together all the programs in the health sciences with plans to expand substantially. McRobbie says IU expects to increase the number of medical students and nursing students by 50 percent over the next few years. Dentistry plans to begin a small program in Bloomington.

"I think it's going to have a huge impact," McRobbie says. "I'm very proud that IU was able to help make this happen by finding space on the university and working with IU Health to establish this on campus. I think this will be a model you will see more of in the future."

A Hoosier by Choice

Talbot says that her biggest fear when McRobbie started as IU's president was that another university would woo him away. She's grateful that he has remained loyal. McRobbie says he's never regretted coming to IU from Australia in 1997. He has become a U.S. citizen and often notes that he is Australian by birth, but a Hoosier by choice.

"I've just thoroughly enjoyed working for the institution that has allowed me to do things that I've always wanted to do and allowed me to achieve things in conjunction with many others," he says. "I've found it immensely satisfying and challenging."

"As I moved up through various positions, I really saw the great potential of Indiana University, that there were so many areas where we had the opportunity to move forward. I found that extremely attractive, to be able to help transform an institution, obviously in conjunction with thousands of others. I've been very happily settled here, particularly since Laurie and I

got married, and have enjoyed working with marvelous colleagues and wonderful people here and around the state."

Talbot notes that IU got a bonus with McRobbie — his wife.

"In him, we got a two-fer," Talbot says in reference to Laurie Burns McRobbie. "Laurie has been probably our most outstanding first lady in many ways. And it was time for a first lady to step up and take leadership in many of the things that she's done, and she's done it with a look back to other first ladies as her role model."

McRobbie credits his wife for her active work, particularly in technology and in attracting more women into the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) disciplines. She is also active in women's philanthropy and in the Bloomington community, leading efforts in civic organizations, such as the Middle Way House board.

The McRobbies have provided IU with solid leadership for a good while, but how much longer will McRobbie be leading the university? His contract runs through the bicentennial, into

the middle of 2021. By that time, McRobbie, now 66, will have been IU's president for 14 years, nearly twice the length of the average university president's tenure.

At the end of his contract, McRobbie says he doubts he will go fishing for the rest of his life, opting to stay in academics and research in some fashion. But, as he noted, there is still work to be done at IU.

"The goal is to have just about everything in the bicentennial strategic plan completed by 2021," he says. "We will then have brought the university to a new level."

"It's been very mentally stimulating, very rewarding to be able to help take a great institution and make it better. That's what I've had the privilege of doing, and I hope history will say that we did make it better." ■

Mike Wright, BA'78, is editor of the Indiana University Alumni Magazine. He came back to work in Bloomington just a few months before McRobbie arrived and was the first U.S. journalist to interview him in 1997.