CHANCELLOR ALLISON COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
May 10, 2016

It is now my honor to present the Class of 2016. Tonight we begin a year-long celebration of 50 years of diplomas being conferred at IU South Bend and 100 years of classes being offered by Indiana University in South Bend. In light of those converging anniversaries I have declared 2016-17 a Jubilee year for IU South Bend.

We start by celebrating the Class of 2016 here tonight. This year we are conferring 846 bachelor’s degree and 170 master’s degrees. The youngest graduate in the class is 20 years old. The oldest graduate is 68 years young.

IU South Bend is a place of many family ties. The Class of 2016 is no exception. I have some examples. Please stand when you hear your names.

We have two mother and daughter combinations graduating tonight. Susan Buford and her daughter Katie are both graduating with bachelor’s degrees in Nursing. Margaret Tam and her daughter Sara are both graduating with bachelor degrees in General Studies with minors in Psychology. Congratulations Susan, Katie, Margaret and Sara.

We have a husband and wife graduating together. Brynn Curry and his wife Janelle are both receiving their Master’s of Business Administration with concentrations in Marketing. Congratulations, Brynn and Janelle.

We have a brother and sister graduating together. Teresa and Andrew Berger. Teresa is graduating with a bachelor’s degree with Honors in Speech Communications with minors in Business and Dance. Her brother Andrew is graduating with a bachelor’s degree in General Studies. Congratulations, Teresa and Andrew.

And we have two brothers graduating together. Sheel and Neel Patel. After immigrating from India, both have earned their bachelor’s degrees in two years. Sheel earned his degree in Management Information Systems. Neel earned his degree in Finance. Each received the Best Student Award in their
majors and have GPAs of more than 3.7. Both are looking at graduate school. Congratulations, Sheel and Neel.

As part of IU South Bend’s Jubilee Year, we will continue to feature the many contributions our students make to their communities, to Indiana, the nation, and even to the world. Whether students graduate with degrees in arts, business, education, health sciences, or the liberal arts and sciences, college graduates are more likely to be engaged with their communities, to give back, to lead, and even to vote.

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities describes regional public universities such as IU South Bend as “stewards of place.” Our core mission as an institution is to help our region develop a more sustainable future. I certainly mean a more environmentally sustainable future, and IU South Bend is a leader in this field. But I also mean a more sustainable future for our region, a future where we foster more civic engagement, have a more diverse economy that features upward economic mobility, and where we are able to sustain significant improvements in the quality of life.

IU South Bend seeks to do these things through offering ever increasing programs in the health sciences, in the arts and culture, in political and social debate, in community conversation and action, in entrepreneurship and innovation. Raising the percentage of adults who hold at least a bachelor’s degree throughout the multicounty region we serve will be critical to this more sustainable future.

Let me introduce you to some graduates who have demonstrated their commitment to learn, serve, and be engaged as citizens and community leaders. Please stand when you hear your name.

Rachel Santos is graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Political Science. She is the winner of the 2016 Outstanding Senior Leader Award. She served as President of the Political Science Club, interned with the American Democracy Project, and was a Senator in the Student Government Association. Her programming has reached thousands of community members including over 1,000 children. She is a first generation college
student who will be a graduate student this fall in the Master’s of Public Affairs program at IUPUI.

Corinne Straight-Reed is graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Political Science. She won the Political Science Department Excellence Award and is an associate producer at WNIT, the local PBS affiliate. Her work producing the program “Politically Speaking” helps illuminate polarizing campaign issues.

Moses Ntongai is graduating with a Master’s degree in Public Affairs. In his native Kenya, he had to drop out of school after the fourth grade. He later finished high school by passing a rigorous national test. After his family immigrated to the U.S., Moses was determined to continue his education. He has earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and now his MPA at IU South Bend with concentrations in health administration and governmental affairs. Moses has returned to Kenya to lead efforts to provide homes to those in need.

Ai Vi Nguyen is another outstanding MPA student. Raised in Vietnam, she took a summer course in Indianapolis and then decided to return to Indiana to continue her studies. Ai Vi chose the Master’s of Public Affairs degree at IU South Bend and has done outstanding work on school funding in Indiana. Tonight is a special moment for her family as her parents have traveled for the first time outside of Vietnam to attend this ceremony.

Rachel and Corinne helped ask questions of elected officials and candidates during a contentious political season that continues today. Moses and Ai Vi are emerging leaders in public affairs. Thank you all for your excellence in serving our region.

Zac Quiett is graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Finance. He served in the Indiana Army National Guard for 12 years, including deployment to Iraq and helping rescue efforts after Hurricane Katrina. Zac was president of the IU South Bend Student Veteran’s Organization this year and brought the Midwest student veterans organization meeting to our campus.
Corey Sheets is graduating with a double major in Political Science and Spanish, with a certificate in International Studies. He served eight years in the U.S. Coast Guard. This summer he will begin a transition to teaching program so he can teach social studies and Spanish.

Suzanne VanDervort is graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Nursing that she earned while serving in the U.S. Navy reserves. In June she will be begin active duty and go to Officer School in San Diego. After being commissioned as an officer she will serve her country as a practicing registered nurse in the Navy.

Zac, Cory, and Susan demonstrate the courage to serve our country during volatile times. We appreciate your many sacrifices.

There are other students I would like to recognize tonight who reflect the outstanding caliber of the class of 2016. These students demonstrate the multiple ways in which IU South Bend serves our region. At the recent Michiana Forty Under Forty programs, nine of the honorees had at least one degree from IU South Bend.

We provide many of the future leaders for our region. During their time as undergraduate or graduate students, the students I’m about to call have contributed to campus life and the community. They have uplifted fellow students while performing academically with excellence. Please stand when you hear your name.

Sydney Sample is graduating with a bachelor’s of science degree in Biology. This fall she will be pursing her doctorate degree in Physical Therapy at Emory University in Atlanta. Congratulations, Sydney.

Jose Zelaya is graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Biochemistry. He has been accepted to the IU School of Medicine. Congratulations, Jose.

Jackie Stalder was a member of the IU South Bend women’s basketball team. She is graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Social Work and will be working as a family and youth minister in Kenton, Ohio. Congratulations, Jackie.
Melissa Macellari was a member of the IU South Bend women’s volleyball team. She is graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education and is the head coach of the Penn High School freshmen girls volleyball team. Congratulations, Melissa.

Jenni Faulkner-Jones is graduating with a double major - Women’s and Gender Studies and English. She is graduating with a 3.92 GPA after working 15 years as a hairdresser. In addition to her academics she participated in student groups and performed in Michiana Monologues. Jenni will be pursuing a dual Masters in clinical Mental Health and in Marriage, Couples and Family Counseling at IU South Bend.

Seth Umbaugh is graduating with a degree in English. He is a first generation college student with a nearly perfect GPA. Seth served as a Peer Mentor and received the Dean’s Scholarship in the Humanities. He has been accepted into Master of Arts in English program at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee.

And Lawrence Mitchell-Matthews is graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Music – Voice. We will miss him singing as soloist and choir member at many of the events on campus. He is going to graduate school at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. We have one more chance to hear him sing at the end of our program tonight. Congratulations, Lawrence.

There are many, many more students who deserve recognition and I’m sorry that time doesn’t allow us to celebrate more of this class’s outstanding accomplishments. I would like to acknowledge groups of students, though. Would all students who are first in their immediate family to graduate from college please stand and remain standing? Would all other students graduating please join them?

Each one of you who walks across the stage this evening has reached a significant goal. Each of you has achieved success and has fellow students, family, colleagues, or community members who are proud of your accomplishment. The faculty and staff of IU South Bend and the people on this platform salute your accomplishments.
President McRobbie, I have presented a brief profile of the 2016 IU South Bend graduating class. They each have a desire to make a difference in a changing and challenging world. These graduates have met Indiana University’s expectations and aspire to achieve excellence in their lives. I present them to you with pride.

Our representative of the Class of 2016 is Hannah Van of South Bend. She is president of the IU South Bend Student Government Association. Ms. Van will now deliver the student address.