SOUTH BEND -- Indiana University South Bend Chancellor Una Mae Reck drew high praise Wednesday, with words including "focused," "tenacious" and "persistent" uttered frequently to describe her leadership style.

"Indiana University is very proud of you," IU President Michael McRobbie told Reck. Under her leadership, enrollment has grown by more than 20 percent, new academic programs have been added and more than $50 million in capital improvements have occurred on campus, he said.

Reck will step down June 30 after 11 years as chancellor. After a one-year sabbatical, she will join the School of Education as a full-time education professor.

Praise and honors were bestowed upon her during the dedication ceremony Wednesday for IUSB's newly completed $22 million Education & Arts Building.

McRobbie presented Reck with two citations for her achievements: IU President's Medal for Excellence, which is the highest honor an IU president can bestow; and the Sagamore of the Wabash, the highest distinction awarded by Indiana's governor. McRobbie made that presentation on behalf of Gov. Mike Pence.

Reck's accomplishments drew many compliments and a standing ovation.

IUSB's first woman chancellor, Reck has led the campus since 2002.

Speakers mentioned a long list of campus achievements under her leadership, including:

-- A pedestrian bridge completed over the St. Joseph River in 2006.

-- Completion of the IUSB Elkhart Center in 2007.

-- River Crossing student apartments, the first on-campus student housing, which opened in 2008.

-- IUSB's Center for a Sustainable Future approved in 2008.

-- Renovation of the second floor of the Administration Building.

-- Opening of IUSB's Civil Rights Heritage Center in the former city natatorium on West Washington Street in 2010.

-- Completion of the Education & Arts Building.

Reck told the crowd gathered under a large tent on campus that her breath was taken away by all the praise. She said she's honored to have been able to lead the campus for more than a decade.
The chancellor thanked everyone, including colleagues, community leaders and government officials for helping her and making her feel welcome when she moved to town. She said she's looking forward to continuing to live in South Bend for many years to come.

"And I want to especially thank the students. When I see them on campus, in the classroom, in the Student Activities Center ... I know why I made public education my life's work," she said.

"Being chancellor of IU South Bend is the best job I've ever had," Reck said.

Speaker after speaker praised the chancellor's focus on seeing projects through to the end.

"Chancellor Reck, we'll remain forever grateful for your tenacity," said Alfred Guillaume, executive vice chancellor for academic affairs, who also is retiring this spring.

"It was pretty clear you were going to stay on the job until you got it done," said Robert Deputy, chair of the IUSB advisory board.

State Rep. B. Patrick Bauer told Reck it's been his honor and pleasure over the years to be able to help push for state funding to help IUSB grow and flourish. "Enjoy. It's a fabulous day for a fabulous event to honor you," he said.

Former Indiana Sen. Robert Meeks made reference to the various completed building projects, and said Reck is the main reason they were accomplished. "Her dedication and her persistence is what brought this about," he said.

Hannah Dill, president of IUSB's student government, praised Reck's work in transforming IUSB into more of a traditional campus. River Crossing student apartments have helped to attract younger and more involved students to campus, she said.

Ilene Sheffer, IUSB's vice chancellor for public affairs and university advancement, said it's been a joy to work with Reck raising about $20 million in contributions for the campus in the past decade. When state funding for the Education & Arts Building and the bridge are included, the total is closer to $50 million, Sheffer said.

"With Mae," Sheffer said, "anything is possible."

facebook.com/tribune.margaretfosmoe

Follow me @mfosmoe

Staff writer Margaret Fosmoe:
mfosmoe@sbtinfo.com
574-235-6329

Copyright © 2013, South Bend Tribune