In 2014, IU President Michael A. McRobbie set an IU record by meeting with two heads of state in the same year. Records of meetings between the university chief and the heads of nations abroad go back to 1956.

1. Six months before Harold MacMillan began his six-year tenure as prime minister of the United Kingdom, he visited his mother’s birthplace in Spencer, Indiana. IU President Herman Wells took the opportunity to bring MacMillan to the Bloomington campus where, during a special convocation, MacMillan was awarded the honorary doctorate of laws (September 1956).

2. For the last decade of his presidency, Herman Wells fostered a close relationship with Thailand’s institutions of higher education. During a visit to consult on the founding of the National Institute of Development Administration in Bangkok, Wells, his tenure as IU president recently concluded, paid a courtesy call on H.E. Field Marshall Thanom Kittikachorn, the Prime Minister, at Government House on September 11, 1965. IU President John Ryan also met with the prime minister in July 1972.

3. Hastings Kamuzu Banda attended IU in 1928 to study history and political science. He became president of Malawi in 1964. In May 1978, President Banda (center) revisited Bloomington and was awarded the honorary doctorate of laws. John Ryan (back left) and Herman Wells (center) showed off changes to the campus over the previous 50 years.
In 1994, Mahathir Mohamad, prime minister of Malaysia, accompanied his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah binti Haji Mohamad Ali, to Bloomington where President Thomas Ehrlich awarded her the honorary doctorate of humane letters for her work on behalf of family health, especially services for women and children. At the time, IU was completing the tenth year of its cooperative program with the MARA Institute of Technology, in which more than 4,600 Malaysian students completed two years of IU course work in Malaysia.

Michael D. Higgins, president of Ireland, earned his master’s degree in sociology at IU in the 1960s. For that degree, he conducted research in several Indianapolis communities. He returned to Bloomington in 2014 to receive the honorary doctorate in humane letters from President McRobbie.

Esra Erdoğan, her sister Sümayye, and brother Bilal, all graduated from IU Bloomington. Their father, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was sworn in as president of Turkey in August 2014. A month later, the sisters, along with their father, met for 90 minutes with Michael and Laurie McRobbie during the IU delegation’s visit.

The black and white photos were supplied by Indiana University Archives.