



State of the University

August 18, 2004

Dr. Robert Kustra

Good morning and welcome to the new academic year. Please enjoy the performance of our own Dr. Francesca Arnone and Dr. James Cook. Dr. Arnone is principal flute in the Boise Philharmonic and teaches Flute performance, music theory and performs regularly as a member of the Boise State Music faculty. Dr. Cook is a concert pianist and performs as a soloist and chamber player. He also serves as Chair of the Music Department.

Thank you Dr. Arnone and Dr. Cook.

Welcome to the new academic year. I hope you had a productive and relaxing summer. I suspect someone in this administration is inching the date we reconvene back every year. It seems like only yesterday that we were blowing bubbles at our spring graduates.

Change comes with the beginning of each new fall semester, when members of the campus family retire or move on and new colleagues join us. I would like to begin today by introducing some new faces and some not so new, but with adjustment in title. At the top of our list of new recruits is Dr. Sona Andrews, our Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Sona brings a wealth of experience from a metropolitan research university that I'm confident will serve as a benchmark for our hopes and dreams for the future. And, as you know from her visit here last semester, she brings incredible energy, insight and intelligence to the challenges we face.

I would also like to introduce someone who has been a key member of our administrative team for some time, but who has been filling in lately on an interim basis while we conducted a national search for a Vice President for Finance and Administration. Last week, I asked the Board of Education to approve Stacy Pearson as our new permanent Vice President for Finance and Administration. Stacy has done an excellent job of serving in the interim and, just as importantly, of impressing the Search Committee—and me--that we had on our staff the very best candidate for this most important position.

We are also joined this year by a new Director of Communications and Marketing, Frank Zang, who comes to us with considerable experience as Director of

Communications and Media for the Salt Lake Olympics. This is a new title for a position that is central to our success. From the recruitment of quality faculty, staff and students to our ability to access funding from government and private sources, the quality of the image we send into a world already overwhelmed with information plays an ever-increasing role in improving our position in Idaho higher education and, for that matter, our reputation in American higher education. As some of you have heard me say before, one of Frank's assignments is to craft a message that successfully conveys a Boise State University even greater than the sum of its parts. I'm sure Frank will be making his way to your offices to discuss your thoughts on the challenge.

This summer, I was invited to serve on a panel at the annual meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures. They asked me as a former legislator and now university president to discuss the values of the public university mission. I found it a thought-provoking assignment. One can argue that with the decline of institutional funding from state government and with students in many states receiving generous grants to use at public or private institutions, the traditional lines of distinction between the public and private sector in higher education are increasingly blurred. Some states just recently have taken us to the brink by offering certain public universities the option of dropping out of the state system of higher education, including giving up revenue they receive from the state, in exchange for the freedom from state rules and regulations. But what is the real cost of this trend?

This Faustian bargain is sure to diminish our system of public higher education in this country. In place of the underlying principle that there is a common good to be served -- and that the common good trumps individual interest and privilege based on wealth or social status -- will be the principle that is all too common in our society today—every man for himself, every woman for herself. Quality education goes to the highest bidder.

This is the reason why I believe so strongly that state government here in Idaho, or anywhere else for that matter, must not surrender its commitment to a well-funded system of higher education. That fundamental conviction is the reason why university presidents from all of Idaho's public institutions have united in support of a strategy to educate Idaho on the value of a public university education. Last April 1st, the lead editorial in the Statesman quoted The Milken Institute's study ranking Idaho 48th in higher education funding and 41st in academic research per capita. That's the kind of news you hope is an April Fool's joke. It wasn't!

If we are to improve our lot, we must demonstrate how public universities and colleges are inextricably linked to the success of our economy and our workforce and how cost-effectively we can deliver postsecondary education in the state if given the appropriate level of state support. We are in the process of planning higher education roundtables at regional locations across Idaho for the purpose of bringing together CEO's, alumni, foundation officers and athletic boosters with our university presidents who will present the case for public higher education. This unified voice for public higher education will speak to all of Idaho's citizens on behalf of all of its state universities and colleges.

If we are to stake out such a position, we must be very clear about just who we are and what we represent to all those we serve and, perhaps most importantly to those who support us with their tax dollars. Let us step back for a moment and reflect on what it means to be a public university, how important it is for us to remember day to day just how critical our work in public higher education is and what a far reaching impact we have on our community, our state, our nation and the world around us.

Perhaps the first and most important point to make about our role in higher education is the public nature of our institution and mission. Boise State College and later Boise State University were built on a base of public support and public mission, first through a property tax authorized by the people and, later, by the state recognizing the value of higher education in southwestern Idaho. We live by that set of public values which distinguishes us from others in this increasingly complex and diverse marketplace of degrees, programs and courses.

Just how does that public purpose define who we are and how we serve our students, our community, our state and our nation? In essence, Boise State as a public university has committed itself to:

- Access and Opportunity
- Quality Teaching and Learning
- Support for a Strong State and Local Economy
- A Research Agenda that improves our students' learning and contributes to quality of life in our community, state and nation
- Civic Engagement of our entire campus community and citizenship education for our students

Let's briefly review each of these with an eye to understanding the progress we have made and the challenges that lie ahead.

First, as a public institution, we stand for access and opportunity at affordable prices: access not only in the sense of assuring those qualified the opportunity to pursue an education, but also in the sense of offering the programs and courses that our increasingly sophisticated economy demands.

As you know from our enrollment growth of recent years, Boise State certainly has met its obligations in accepting as many new students as we can accommodate. Our enrollment will increase again this year, albeit with a smaller percentage increase, because we turned a small percentage of our applicants away this year and last. Similarly, there are a number of new degree and certificate programs, many at the graduate level, that have been approved by the State Board but for which funding does not exist.

The use of student fees to help in the development of these new degree programs is critical as we move forward, not only for Boise State, but also for the other higher education institutions in Idaho. Unfortunately, the State of Idaho does not currently allow Boise State, or any other university for that matter, to use student fees to directly pay for the costs of instruction. Consequently, we play a shell game with fee dollars and dollars provided by the state which has served to create unnecessary barriers.

I suggest that a more straightforward approach is preferred, and in fact, last week at a meeting of college and university presidents, we designated our top policy priority for the coming year to be fee reform. Our Board agreed that making changes to Idaho law to allow student fee dollars to be used to pay for the cost of instruction and education in higher education is an important issue to pursue this next legislative session. It is not a matter of doing so in order to charge our students more, but rather to be honest that the costs paid by students for their education may be used directly to improve the instruction that they receive, and may be targeted to the development of new programs to enhance our educational offerings for their benefit.

As you have heard me say many times, one solution to the problem of access is a community college in the Treasure Valley on the BSU West campus. I am delighted to report that we are anticipating a multimillion dollar gift, the details to be announced later, that will greatly enhance our efforts for a new technical college building on the West campus, an important part of our strategy to move technical programs to the West campus and use that space for expansion of graduate programs, lab space, offices and classrooms on our Boise campus.

As a public institution, we stand committed to providing the highest quality teaching and learning to our students. With a proud tradition as a teaching institution, we will double our efforts to realize our students' success so they can choose the most expedient path to graduation and a career.

Along these lines, we have some work to do. Forty percent of our students do not persist from their first to their second year. We must do better in this regard. That, of course, affects our graduation rate, which is also low, even for a commuter institution. Now that I've spent my first year attempting to learn more about where we need to place our emphasis, let me offer some thoughts on how we are going to accomplish our goal.

First of all, we are going to reap the benefits of those whose work has preceded me. Our new residence halls and apartments open up this fall with our new Faculty-in-Residence program providing a stronger academic environment in our residence halls and the opportunity to build bridges between Student Housing and Academic Affairs. Our first group of recruits from the faculty to live in the residence halls include Dr. Rob Anson from the College of Business, Dr. Jeremy Ball from the College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs, Dr. Lisa Brady from the College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs, and Dean Jim Girvan, from the College of Health Sciences. I congratulate and thank these residential pioneers.

We also continue with the planning phase for our new Student Services Center and the State Board just recently approved our request to build a new Health, Wellness and Counseling Center to increase and improve our services to students in those areas.

This year, we ramped up our efforts to orient students to campus with full-day and half-day orientation programs that served over 2,600 incoming students and as many as 1,200 parents. I had the opportunity to speak at some of these sessions and the work of our staff was impressive.

Next year, we will introduce a new academic component to our orientation program. We will assign a book to our first year students in the spring and ask them to come to campus next fall prepared to discuss it in an opening orientation session. I introduced a similar initiative on another campus and I can personally attest to the strong message it sends students about the importance we attach to reading assignments and class discussion. It also operates as a social icebreaker for new students meeting each other in a campus setting for the first time.

Another new initiative designed to improve student success is the Degree Progress Report to be unveiled on BroncoWeb in October. Students will be able to review what courses they have completed and what courses are still required for completion of any baccalaureate degree we offer. For those of you who advise, please choose one of 13 workshops to be offered this September to understand how this new tool can help you in your advising role.

Retention experts tell us that students who develop relationships with faculty tend to persist and graduate at a higher rate than those students who do not. Academic advising is the primary structured activity that allows for one-to-one contact with a representative of the university. It combines educational planning, relationship building with faculty and acclimation to university expectations, review of University policies and procedures and career planning to support students' goals.

In order to encourage and assist more faculty members to become advisors, we will offer a Faculty Advising Institute this semester designed to prepare new faculty to assume advising responsibilities. In the past, we have simply expected faculty to conduct advising, but have not provided the support necessary. Under our new policy, faculty completing the program will receive a stipend.

By the way, I have already begun training to become an adviser in the spring semester. I look forward to seeing you at the Institute as we all learn how to improve our students' success. The date of the Institute meeting will be announced soon.

Two members of our faculty, Drs. Kenneth Coll and Roger Stewart in the College of Education, have been very helpful in guiding retention efforts here on campus. Their research, based on surveys of hundreds of BSU students, has identified two of the most important factors for improving retention: high quality classroom instruction coupled with out-of-class interactions and high quality student support services.

Some of you have already attended Ken and Roger's training sessions, but they will be offering another session on Monday, September 13. They will help us understand the important role that faculty can play in retention, especially how we can help develop and maintain an infrastructure to provide retention surveying and reporting in classrooms across the campus. We are very fortunate to have members of our own faculty so committed to this effort. I urge you to attend the September 13 session. You will be contacted with further details.

We have also put the finishing touches on the architectural design of the Interactive Learning Center, which includes a Center for Teaching and Learning and a faculty lounge to make it convenient and comfortable for faculty to visit and partake of the Center's programs. I am really excited about this new emphasis on teaching and learning. Our new Center will stimulate a campus-wide conversation about teaching and learning skills, keep our teaching community abreast of pedagogical developments in the field, help faculty ground their teaching practices in scholarship, assist faculty in the enhancement of their teaching with new tools of technology and share the best practices of collaborative learning.

By the way, I was surfing the net the other day, checking out the websites of universities that have Centers for Teaching and Learning and came across this sketch that sums up the challenge before us in the classroom. (See Active Learning Diagram)

There is one more initiative that you will be hearing about during the course of this year. Sona Andrews and Peg Blake will lead a Task Force on the First Year Transition and Student Success. They'll consider strategies for our campus that will result in a successful transition to university life for our first year students. I'm sure that we can expect significant and productive outcomes from this endeavor.

In addition to focusing on retaining students and ensuring students make it through their undergraduate experience; preparing those students who wish to continue in graduate school is also key. The McNair Scholars program, administered at Boise State by David Hall, targets this effort to those students who may need an extra boost in their preparation. Again, faculty involvement with students, especially as mentors, is critical to this program. Please keep an eye out for students who have potential for this type of program and get involved with helping them in this regard. You can contact David for more details and information.

In the meantime, no matter what your assignment is here on campus, you can help -- as many of you already do. Reach out to our students, especially our first year students who may need an extra bit of guidance or directions to their next class. Let's really focus on removing unnecessary administrative barriers and hassles that can impede student success.

Before I turn to how Boise State will expand its mission in graduate education and research, I do want to underscore the significance of the new strategies I just outlined to improve the undergraduate experience. We take undergraduate education very seriously at Boise State and will not settle for anything other than the very best learning environment possible.

As a public institution, we stand committed to playing a major role in the economic development of this state and region, joining with the Governor, the Legislature, state agencies and local governments in building a strong Idaho economy and assisting it in its transition to a knowledge-based economy.

One of the most effective contributions we can make to Idaho's future in this regard is to capitalize on our position as a metropolitan university and tailor key academic programs to our urban environment. Our plans for new graduate programs include doctoral and masters' degrees in areas linked to the needs of the Treasure Valley and the state capital in engineering, public policy, educational leadership and urban and regional planning. Two other doctoral programs in our plans, geology and biology, build on our historic academic strength and are of significant national importance with substantial funding opportunities and a trend toward interdisciplinarity.

As we update our 2000-2005 strategic plan, we must remain committed to the goal of becoming a doctoral/research university. Faculty quality is the heart of all measures of institutional quality and the existence of doctoral programs will help generate stronger pools for faculty recruitment and lead to "complete departments" that are highly enriched learning environments.

Just as important, for our increasingly sophisticated economy, doctoral programs attract invaluable professional expertise to the state. And, as I will emphasize in a moment, doctoral programs open research-funding opportunities and also foster the growth of centers, institutes and technology transfer important to creating new jobs.

Doctoral programs are also critical to the metropolitan research mission and we should add at least one in the near future to qualify for Carnegie doctoral classification. Please understand that this is not some irrelevant quest for prestige. A higher Carnegie classification can lead to high quality students, faculty and administrative staff, and consequently, increases in funding from grants and contracts, intellectual property and gifts to the university.

At the same time, we must work on funding more graduate assistantships, which will help us recruit high quality graduate students thereby enhancing the academic quality of our programs. Last spring, I appeared with my colleagues in administration before a panel of research administrators from the nation's research universities. They had come to Idaho to evaluate the proposals for Higher Education Research Council (HERC) funding. It was an eye-opener for me. The

committee could not have been more gracious, but the message was clear. We were unlikely to get the \$1 million grant until we demonstrated an infrastructure of research that includes sufficient graduate assistants to justify the implementation of the grant. And sure enough, we did not get the grant notwithstanding the fact that we had an impressive faculty contingent applying for it. I don't want that to happen again, especially when the proposal itself was such a good one. We will find a way to carry more graduate students in areas critical to the success of our grant applications.

One final observation about the goal of becoming a doctoral university: few of us on this campus deny the reputational currency our athletic program raises for Boise State and the window it provides prospective students and faculty recruited from around the country. The same advantage accrues from strong doctoral programs, the reputation of which creates a feedback loop that will attract prestigious faculty, students and increased external funding across the university, and not just in the disciplines with the doctorates.

As a public institution, we stand committed to joining our sister institutions in a research agenda that pushes the frontiers of science forward in discovery of new cures for disease, in improving the quality of life in Idaho and in creating learning opportunities for our students.

Just last week, I had the opportunity to attend the third annual conference of the Biomedical Research Infrastructure Network (BRIN) with some of our participating faculty. We celebrated Idaho's grant from the National Institute of Health of \$16 million, \$3.8 million of which comes to Boise State.

The meeting was a very impressive display of the research talent on our life sciences and engineering faculties, the institutional collaboration among the faculties of Idaho universities and colleges, and most importantly, the active research roles of our students, which enriches their education and enhances their opportunities to enroll in the nation's finest graduate schools. What is slowly but surely emerging here in Idaho is a multi-institutional, biomedical foundation of teaching and research that will lead to the creation of new jobs and economic security in Idaho and will contribute to path breaking developments in biomedical science which will surely improve the longevity and quality of life as we know it.

As impressed as I am with what I learned from student and faculty presentations at the BRIN conference, I am also aware of the research contributions of faculty across the university and how very different the contribution of scholarship can be

from discipline to discipline and college to college. Our business faculty with its strong ties to the local economy and consulting relationships with its companies defines the research contribution differently than natural scientists or engineering professors working on a grant from the National Institute of Health. In all colleges, research plays a critical role in building stronger foundations of knowledge and scholarship in the disciplines and in engaging our students in the discovery process that can make learning the joy that it should be in all of our lives.

Another great example of the diversity of our scholarship on our campus arrived on my desk just two days ago. Constantine and the Christian Empire is a detailed, comprehensive and compelling portrayal of the life and times of a great Roman emperor. So much of the conflict over religious doctrine in the Christian Church today can be traced back to Constantine. The author? He is none other than our own Dr. Charles Odahl who brings distinction to his colleagues and his university with his *magnum opus* hot off the presses. Congratulations to Charles Odahl.

Two other distinguished Boise State professors recently published what is believed to be the first full-sized textbook on mediation. Mediation Theory and Practice, written by Dr. Suzanne McCorkle, Director of Boise State's conflict management program, and Dr. Melanie Reese, an instructor in Boise State's applied academic program will certainly bring recognition to our growing mediation program. Congratulations to Suzanne McCorkle and Melanie Reese.

Of course, scholarship comes in forms other than strict research or book publications. I was lucky enough recently to also experience our own Dr. Richard Klautsch, Chair of Theatre Arts, in the Merry Wives of Windsor at the Idaho Shakespeare Festival. What a wonderful performance!

There are many strategies to employ if we are to support our faculty in their research. For one thing, we must raise substantial funding for endowed chairs and professorships—a top priority of mine this year--so we not only can attract the very best faculty, but so we can also retain our fine faculty who are very competitive in the higher education marketplace. I know it can be frustrating at times when we simply cannot afford to do what it takes to support exceptional teaching and research. Thanks to all of you who have persevered and found innovative and ingenious solutions to funding shortages. Most of you have been very patient and I ask you to bear with us. We are at a critical stage of Boise State's history and together we can look back on a transformation in higher education that few have an opportunity to effect. It is your leadership, tenacity, creativity and sheer will that will make it happen.

I promise that you will have my leadership and support in every way that I know how and can humanly deliver. We will succeed. And to steal from this year's football victory cry, we will do it **BRICK BY BRICK!** Not a bad analogy and segue to another critical component of our strategy.

Later this week, a consultant will visit our campus to meet with administrators, faculty and staff to explore a capital campaign for Boise State, an effort to identify the capital resources required for us to achieve our goals, a plan to raise them and, of course, an implementation phase. Although we are not ready to announce such a campaign, I am convinced that the time to plan for a campaign and the time to begin what is known as the silent phase of the campaign is upon us.

In this last year, I have listened to so many exciting ideas about how we can realize our dreams in facilities that match our faculty's talent and our students' abilities. In fact, to accommodate all of the requests, we have undertaken a new facilities master planning effort and also reorganized our Facilities Planning Council, which can address space-planning needs and coordinate our funding mechanisms so they work together to meet the University's needs.

Clearly, our current incremental approach to development and fundraising will not allow us to reach our goals for years to come. That is where a capital campaign comes in, a coordinated, campus-wide identification of our needs and the blueprint to raise the funds. Once we commit to such a campaign, it will be a multi-year effort and will engage our entire campus in one way or another. Our Boise State Foundation, alumni, supporters in the community and beyond will be called into action to achieve whatever goal we set. But one thing is for sure. It will be a goal that will shock any of us who have been toiling in the vineyards seeking funds just to keep our programs alive. The capital campaign will be based on an ambitious plan, but one that is carefully crafted to guarantee success in meeting its fundraising goals.

By the way, our Vice President of University Advancement, Rick Smith, left us in July to become the President of the American Youth Soccer Organization. Mark Dunham, who I count on a great deal these days, agreed to take on some additional duties in addition to his current Government Relations assignment in order to serve as Interim, but a search will soon be underway to find a new leader. Stay tuned!

Our current Strategic Plan for 2000-2005 will be in need of an update very soon. The timing is perfect as we explore a capital campaign so I have asked our Provost to lead a strategic planning process this fall that updates the Plan.

This effort is consistent with the State Board of Education's adoption of an Eight-Year Academic Plan for Idaho public universities and colleges at its June 17 meeting. Designed to optimize the delivery of academic programs, to clarify statewide missions and regional missions and to encourage the coordination of academic programming among the institutions, this plan calls for the execution of memoranda of agreements among the universities.

By virtue of this official action, Boise State now has the statewide mission for select graduate programs in Social Work, Urban Studies, Urban Regional Planning and Public Policy and Public Administration. This marks the first time that Boise State has received formal recognition for our expertise in these areas statewide.

The Eight-Year state plan is considered a rolling plan so it is imperative that we have its counterpart on our campus continually updated to take account of changes in our disciplines and programs and the changing educational needs of our students. The plan calls for the addition of over 50 new degree or certificate programs, over half of which are at the graduate level, to be developed by Boise State between 2004 and 2011.

As a public institution, we stand committed to producing the next generation of active, informed citizens willing and able to engage in public life in an articulate and effective manner. We have the responsibility to work with our students in sharpening their citizenship skills whether for the purpose of getting involved in government or politics or simply exercising their franchise to vote.

Our campus should be a laboratory of civic opportunity with public officials, opinion makers, policy experts and advocates speaking to rooms of students filled to capacity. Toward that end, you may remember that I asked Dr. Stephanie Witt last year to spearhead our efforts to focus interest and participation in the American Democracy Project, sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. There is much to report since last year. The Civic Engagement Steering Committee comprised of faculty, students and staff meets regularly to plan and coordinate events, including an Introductory Planning Session intended for faculty and staff interested in learning how to get involved. A Faculty Development forum is planned for September and, of course, the Frank Church Conference is in October. I will participate in a panel discussion and information session on the November presidential election in late October.

The Committee has also created a website to provide information on events and updates on projects throughout the year. Please check it out for dates of

upcoming events. I sincerely hope that you can join us in making this effort one that will have a lasting impact on our students and the campus community in general.

I must admit, on this one, I have a bias. In addition to the many worthy goals of this project, I hope that we are able to convey to our students the value and importance of public higher education so they can carry it with them wherever they may live.

Any effort to address citizenship skills must reach beyond our borders and include an international dimension that is an integral, seamless and a continuous part of the undergraduate educational experience. Sabine Klahr, Director of our International Programs, our Dean of Extended Studies Michael Stockstill and I have been working on some initial thoughts on how to elevate and incorporate internationalization into the campus culture in all we do. I will appoint a Steering Committee that Sona Andrews and I will assist in developing a plan for weaving this new and improved international focus throughout the curriculum and the campus. If you would like to help, please call Sabine by next Friday as she puts the finishing touches on committee membership.

I hope that I have been successful this morning at distinguishing the mission and role of Boise State as a public, metropolitan research university. I am reminded of the book, Built to Last. The authors argued that successful companies who take a long-term perspective prosper when they continue to emphasize their core values at the same time that they are market savvy to the need for change, new products and new directions.

We have just reviewed a set of initiatives focused on improving the undergraduate experience at Boise State—our core value. At the same time, we will seek new directions as we move our graduate programming and research agendas forward to create added value for our students, the State of Idaho, its local communities and the Treasure Valley's dynamic economy.

I spent most of my life, in the City by the Lake where Daniel Burnham who designed Chicago's lakefront uttered those famous words, "Make no small plans." The destiny of Boise State University and public higher education in general requires each and every one of us to "make no small plans", to recognize our roles as stewards of a university whose future we hold in our classrooms, our offices, our playing fields, our performance halls and our library.

When the former President of the University of Michigan, James Duderstadt, retired a few years ago, he wrote a book entitled A University for the 21st Century. He lamented the strong market forces that he claimed were transforming our public universities in unforeseen and unacceptable ways. He predicted that aggressive for-profit entities and commercial forces would drive the university toward mediocrity. But he pointed the way toward an alternate vision of public higher education, a culture of learning in which universal and ubiquitous educational opportunities are provided to meet the broad and growing needs of our society.

What makes me so proud to be your president is that I believe Boise State lives the brighter future President Duderstadt hoped for. Our faculty and staff serve the people of Idaho in Nampa, Mountain Home and Twin Falls in addition to our home campus and our West campus. We serve students at risk, and we serve honor students. We serve older students on our campus and through our wonderful Renaissance Institute. We provide daycare for our youngest Broncos. We are about to offer a weekend MBA program. We offer a quality education to students as close as those new residence halls and as far away as Kazakhstan, and entire Master's degrees on line. The list is much longer, and impressive, as are each and every one of you who make a difference in the lives of our students.

Thank you for all you do for this great university, have a great semester and join us at the University picnic this evening at 5:30 in Julia Davis Park.