

State of the University
Dr. Robert Kustra
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THE PAST

It all began on a Tuesday morning in the midst of the Great Depression – September 6, 1932 to be exact – on a tree lined Idaho street near downtown Boise. Led by its founder and president, Idaho Episcopal Bishop Middleton Barnwell, Boise Junior College opened its doors for the first time. The numbers that first day: 4 buildings, 15 faculty members, 41 male students and 37 female students.

Today, 75 years later, as we gather for this annual state of the university address, ours is the campus of the largest university in Idaho, with 165 buildings, more than 600 faculty, and student enrollment that we expect to exceed 19,000 for the first time this Fall.

To understand how far we have traveled in a relatively short period of time, consider these numbers:

- At its founding, the school's budget was \$20,000. Today, it is \$287 million, including \$83 million in state funds;
- At its founding, BJC had 2,000 library books. Today, Albertson Library has more than 615,000 books and bound periodicals, 1.4 million pieces of microfilm, and 132 electronic databases, to mention just a few of its collections;
- At its founding, student tuition and fees were \$60 per semester. Today, they are \$2,573.

The theme of our 75th anniversary is “Treasuring the Past...Shaping the Future.” Countless students, faculty, staff and alumni and friends have contributed to the mosaic that reflects what Boise State stands for today. Earlier this summer, in anticipation of our 75th anniversary, we asked some of those folks to recall their memories and describe their experiences on camera. Please watch the video screens:

(My Boise State Video)

THE PRESENT

As I said earlier, our enrollment should exceed 19,000 this Fall for the first time in our history. And just in case you think it's only the Fiesta Bowl victory that accounts for the increase, this enrollment record is the 10th that we have set in the last 11 years.

Ladies and gentlemen, Boise State has become a university of choice for outstanding students from Idaho and across the West. While it is still too early to profile our new entering class in its entirety, we can share exciting information on the students we have admitted.

The August 15th admissions report shows an increase over last year of 145 first time freshmen with GPAs above 3.5 and 190 more than last year in the 3.0-3.49 range. Our admitted students have also done better on the standardized admissions tests. To date, we have seen an increase of 15.8% of students in the top 10% of the SAT or ACT in Math, and a 7.8% increase in the verbal portion.

This year, we welcome our first class of 28 Civic Leadership Scholars. This scholarship -- for Idaho residents who have experience in and a commitment to civic leadership -- is our way of preparing Idaho's next generation of civic leaders. Thanks to our Fiesta Bowl-driven royalty revenue for the funding to kick off this scholarship program.

Another measure of success in recruiting academically talented students is the 12 new National Merit finalists and the 118 students who qualified for the National Merit Smart Grant joining us this Fall. The Smart Grant, by the way, encourages students with financial need to major in Engineering, Science and Technology, or Math.

Retention rates for upperclassmen have also improved this year with returning enrollment numbers exceeding those of last Fall. We've seen a 6.2% improvement for juniors and a 3.1% increase for seniors.

Credit goes to Vice President for Student Affairs, Michael Laliberte, and his team for their continuing efforts to raise our student profile.

For the second straight year, we begin the Fall semester at 100% capacity in our on-campus residential housing. We are moving forward on our next residential housing initiative and you will hear more about those plans later this year. We are also assembling a task force to explore how we can strengthen and enhance fraternities and sororities on our campus, including the development of a housing plan for the Greek system.

Last spring we said a fond farewell to 22 retiring faculty and staff members who had a combined total of 540 years of service to Boise State. This morning we welcome 47 new colleagues. They hail from our nation's most distinguished graduate schools and we are honored to count them among our faculty. Would all new faculty please stand so we can welcome you. For those of you new to the Treasure Valley and Idaho, I know you will come to love it as much as Kathy and I have.

Our campus must have the monopoly on construction cranes in the Treasure Valley! We currently have five major projects at various stages of construction. The "general foreman" of our campus master plan -- and all the projects that bring the plan to life -- is Vice President for Finance & Administration Stacy Pearson and her team. Thanks to Stacy for her great leadership.

Tomorrow we'll officially open the Interactive Learning Center, the first building from our 2005 master plan to be completed. It is a state-of-the-art, technologically-savvy building, symbolic of the digital age in which we live. It is equipped with the interactive technology our students need for careers dependent on a facile navigation of the cyber world. The interactive design fosters learning anytime, anywhere in the building with access to digital media, 3-D visualization and other innovations in learning and teaching.

Unlike most multi-story academic buildings, there was no template for the four-story interactive learning center. Each floor was individually designed with cutting edge construction and oversized glass panels that allow for a bright and open interior. It is very impressive and I encourage you to attend the official opening tomorrow at 1:15 in the lobby to be followed at 2:00

p.m. with a lecture by Charles Glassick of the Carnegie Foundation. A reception for faculty and building tours will follow at 3:00 p.m.

The building is also home to the new Center for Teaching and Learning, under the capable leadership of Dr. Susan Shadle. Created last year as a resource for faculty development and the enhancement of student learning, the center reaffirms the strong commitment Boise State makes to the highest quality undergraduate education.

This year's plans for the Center include the creation of the Boise State Teaching Scholars program. Faculty members can join one of the three interdisciplinary communities in a yearlong process of inquiry into undergraduate research, engagement of first-year college students in learning or the enhancement of student learning through innovative assessment.

Dr. Shadle and I have also discussed our interest in using the Center as the place for a campus wide discussion about the role of liberal arts education at Boise State. Professors Nick Miller and Tony Roark brought this issue to my attention and they, together with Susan, will lead a series of discussions this year about how Boise State can improve its commitment to liberal arts education. I will soon issue an invitation to faculty for the first meeting at the Center's new home. I'm looking forward to a great turnout and a stimulating and productive discussion.

Back to our construction projects, the new parking structure south of the student union is expected to open – with 750 spaces – just in time for the start of classes (*cross your fingers!*). Even when we subtract the spaces lost to other construction projects, we still have a net gain of 434 new spaces.

As you observed arriving here today, our student union expansion is well underway. The SUB, built when our enrollment was half the size it is today, is no longer able to meet the needs of our growing student body.

The total projected 30 million dollar project will give us 66,000 new square feet, as well as renovation of the existing 27,000 square feet of space. When the project is finished in June 2009, the Table Rock Café will have moved to the first floor, giving it the feel of a retail restaurant on the street; another ballroom will have been added; and there will be additional space for students to study and socialize and for student clubs to meet.

The two skyscrapers that you see adjacent to Bronco Stadium are actually elevator shafts. Our skyline will be considerably taller with the renovation of the West stands, including sky suites, club seats, a new press box, a stadium club and a new faculty club. I know it is hard to believe, but this project will be completed in time for next season's football opener. Thanks to Athletic Director Gene Bleymaier's vision and persistence, this great addition to our campus will soon become a reality.

Next Spring, we plan to officially break ground on a four-story, \$25 million building behind the Student Recreation Center that will house the Student Health, Wellness and Counseling Center and the Department of Nursing. Placing these together will maximize opportunities to integrate

classroom learning and laboratory, clinical and internships experiences with research and health care policy. We expect this building to be completed in time for the Fall 2009 semester.

The word “metropolitan” is front and center in our mission statement, and we are clearly a university “of, by and for” the metropolitan region we serve.

What strikes me as so unusual about our history and what must account for the symbiotic relationship between Boise State and the communities that it serves is the historically strong support that Boise State has received going all the way back to the then Boise Junior College. Even during the Great Depression, property taxpayers voted six times to increase their taxes to keep BJC alive and well.

As an historical aside, it is interesting to note that the local tax funding disappeared when BJC evolved into a university. We have now come full circle, as the voters recently restored local funding with the creation of a new community college, the College of Western Idaho. We look forward to working with CWI in partnership and cooperation.

By the way, the CWI trustees recently named Dennis Griffin, the Executive Director of Boise State West to be the interim President of CWI. I think Dennis is also with us today and we extend our congratulations! We also extend appreciation to the Legislature for \$5 million in start up funding, and to the J.A. & Kathryn Albertson Foundation for a \$10 million grant and their fantastic advertising campaign that did so much to lead to the success of the referendum. Finally, thanks also to Governor Otter for the great leadership he provided the initiative.

But, back to the subject at hand. Those of you who know me well have learned that I do not like Boise State defined as a metropolitan university without the insertion of that critical word “research” – our middle name if you will.

One of the most successful and innovative universities in American today is Arizona State, which has redefined what it means to be a metropolitan research university. Recently, it commissioned a study to determine the relationships between a university’s research and its communities. The economists who conducted the study tracked the outside funding generated by research and the funds invested in research and documented the impact research dollars have on a community’s economy.

What did they find? The obvious – research dollars pay staff, purchase equipment and supplies, and hire consultants and graduate students – to add direct economic value to the region. There are also the indirect benefits of training new researchers, attracting high-value employers, developing new technologies of value to local firms, incubating start-up companies that add jobs to the local and regional economy, and most importantly, in the case of our medical research, improvements in both the preservation and treatment of disease, thereby adding to the quality and longevity of life.

Of course, those who have their work patented are not the only ones adding other economic welfare of the community. Recently studies have documented the significant contribution the

Arts make to the region's economic welfare. Two obvious examples come to mind – theater and publications – and we have recent bragging rights in both.

In Theatre Arts, “In the Sawtooths,” a play written by Boise State Theatre Arts alumnus Dano Madden, was selected to be performed at the National Kennedy Center American Theatre Festival in Washington D.C. – one of only five productions nationwide to be invited.

On Boise State's literary front, we have the distinguished Idaho Review, a publication of the College of Arts & Sciences and the Department of English. Its short stories and poetry have been chosen for national awards and honored by having a number of its selections included in major national anthologies.

Both Richard Klautsch and Mitch Wieland have referred to their latest honors as *their* Fiesta Bowls and I cannot think of a better way to characterize these national tributes to the exceptional quality of our Arts students and faculty. But I digress...

Like Arizona State University, we too can demonstrate to our state and local government partners that Boise State's expanding role is contributing significant economic and social value to the local and regional economy. We can report a 47% increase in total awarded funds for research and sponsored project funding since the year 2000. Total awarded funds from the National Science Foundation have jumped 130%, and funding from the National Institute of Health has increased 314% in the same time period.

Our goal in the research arena is clear. Boise State must build a stronger and more robust infrastructure to support and encourage faculty from all disciplines to apply for and maintain research grants with respect to their scholarly interests. Leading the effort to help faculty succeed is Dr. Mark Rudin, and he is making great progress in improving Boise State's ability to increase our research funding and make a significant contribution to our region and state.

A companion to our research focus is our commitment to increase the number of graduate programs that serve the citizens of our Valley's increasingly sophisticated economy. This year, our Provost, Dr. Andrews, will take her collaborative spirit and her considerable advocacy skills to our sister institutions and the State Board to seek approval for a new Ph.D. in Biomolecular Science and a new Ph.D. in Public Policy. She will also be proposing new masters degrees in Chemistry, Political Science and Community and Regional Planning.

With new masters level programs in Anthropology and Nursing beginning this Fall, we have increased our graduate school offerings to 77 programs and our graduate college reported a 14% increase in full-time graduate students last Spring. Sona and Dean Jack Pelton have done a masterful job in working with deans and faculty to implement these academic programs.

But there is one *other* word we use in our mission statement – that is distinction. Thanks to the work of people in this room, Boise State has already achieved distinction as an outstanding university. But for us to move to the next level, we will require significant resources and investments in our mission. Let us look now to the future and explore what it will take to assure

that we are a metropolitan research university of distinction. In order to do this, we must confront two important facts of life about the funding of public universities in America today.

First, public higher education in America is in greater competition with other state priorities than ever before, and when you compare Boise State's per student funding to our sister institutions, we come in last.

The infrequent and scattered capital appropriations for higher education force us to build our infrastructure on the backs of our students. To put our capital needs in perspective -- one-third of the state Department of Public Works projects statewide are currently at Boise State University. Unfortunately, none of these projects involve state appropriations.

The ambitious building program underway on our campus today was enabled by student government joining with the administration two years ago to seek from the State Board of Education authority to create the strategic facility fee. It provides a stable source of funding to leverage any federal, state, university or private funding for future construction and renovation called for in our campus master plan.

The annual proceeds from this student fee are used to service the debt incurred to build the facilities. This fee is currently supporting construction of the new parking deck, the SUB expansion, and a portion of the new Nursing and Student Health and Wellness Center. The new Center for Environmental Science and Economic Development is in the planning and design phase and will also be financed in part by this fee.

And that brings me to the second fact of life that is becoming increasingly apparent to our students in recent years, not to mention the State Board that acts on our tuition requests each year. Rising tuition and fee rates in the last few years make it more and more difficult to return to the student fee well to compensate for the lack of state funding.

It has become clear to me over the last few years that it is time for Boise State to join the ranks of private universities and an increasing number of public universities, and embark on a comprehensive campaign for significant private funding.

THE FUTURE

Today, I am pleased to announce our first-ever comprehensive campaign: Destination Distinction, a Campaign for Boise State University. Our goal is to raise \$175 million through this campaign. Even though the realities of public higher education funding that bring us to this decision are not so pleasant, I think the campaign itself and the spirit it will generate on our campus and in the community will invigorate and embolden our supporters to join us in this quest for distinction in all we do.

Two prominent alumni, Steve Appleton and Allen Dykman, have agreed to co-chair the campaign; a steering committee of prominent friends of Boise State has assembled to help; and, we have a new Vice President for Advancement, Dr. Howard Smith, whose vision, organizational skills and ease with donors make him an ideal candidate to lead our team of fundraising professionals in this major, major effort.

The \$175 million raised in this campaign will focus on what we consider our four most important needs: support for students; support to assure an outstanding faculty; support for academic programs and research; and support for capital renovation and expansion.

Support of Students

The \$37 million we seek to raise in this category will include funds for scholarships, assistantships, the residential colleges, housing for graduate students, and the library.

The need for additional scholarship funding, both need and merit based, is imperative and will help in our quest to attract the best and brightest students to Boise State as well as keep talented young people in Idaho.

Our residential colleges and graduate residential scholars program provide opportunities for students to create a bridge between learning and living. Expanding our current offerings to serve more students and add more areas of interest will serve to raise our overall academic quality and ensure all student with interest and ability can participate.

Today's 21st century university library must offer a rich array of print and digital information. As our student population grows and new programs are added, additional funding in this area will expand journal collections, databases and other classroom and research materials.

Support of Learning

As Boise State grows, so does its ability to attract top-notch teachers and researchers with impressive credentials. We greatly appreciate the Governor and Legislature's 5% merit based salary enhancement in last year's budget for the key role it will play in achieving our goals in this area.

But we have also learned that it takes more than salaries in today's increasingly competitive marketplace to succeed. We hope to show prospective donors the critical linkage between hiring the best faculty and having access to high quality technology, equipment, laboratory/studio/work space, state-of-the-art classrooms and other resources.

The competition for excellent faculty and staff is as intense as that for top-notch students, and hiring the very best teachers and researchers is paramount in advancing Boise State to the next level. Endowed professorships, which we will create with this campaign, are an incentive to attract faculty who excel in their fields, and can inspire their colleagues and students who study with them.

Cutting-edge and competitive research requires internal research seed grants to give faculty the time and resources to initiate research projects and develop grant proposals. Support for research development, grant management, technology transfer patents, cross-college and multi-institutional collaborations, and university visibility with funding agencies are critical elements of the research infrastructure.

We have targeted \$26 million to support these efforts to assure an outstanding faculty.

Support for Academic Programs and Research

We hope to raise \$43 million in support for this area. Universities continually examine their array of offerings and develop programs that respond to market needs, community interests and expand disciplinary knowledge. Boise state's academic plan focuses on creating breadth and depth in graduate programs to parallel existing strengths in undergraduate offerings.

Research centers provide the environment for faculty and students to make important advancements that cannot readily be made independently. They have the ability to generate grants and become self-supporting over time. The university proposes establishing interdisciplinary centers around the following unifying themes: innovation and entrepreneurship, imaging and memory, health policy, math education, biomechanics and human performance, and alternative energies and sustainability.

Support for Facilities

Finally, we are seeking \$69 million in support of facility renovation and expansion. The campaign has selected four mission-critical building needs: A new building for the College of Business and Economics; a new Alumni Center; improvements to Bronco Stadium; and the new Nursing Department labs and facility. I'm happy to report the funding is already complete on the latter project.

A new facility for the College of Business and Economics will allow the college to support cutting-edge education and learning technologies for undergraduate and graduate degree programs and to expand its interdisciplinary work with other units on campus.

The new multi-level alumni center not only will be a home base to which alums can always return, it will also host scores of Boise State activities as a meeting and conference facility. This showcase building will be a visitor center, historical archive and an integral partner with student activities on campus, allowing for a natural transition from student to alumnus.

As I have said many times, intercollegiate athletics provides the community and the nation a window to the university that brings positive exposure to the campus. And boy, did our football team bring us positive exposure!!

The initiative for athletic excellence is the long-range plan for the Athletic Department and includes four areas of emphasis: capital projects, staffing, program upgrades and scholarships. The immediate focus is on the expansion of Bronco Stadium with a new press box and sky suite complex, to be followed by an increase in stadium seating.

Last night in conjunction with the 75th anniversary gala, we launched the public phase of this campaign. Please join me in watching the Destination Distinction video that had its premier last night.

(Destination Distinction video)

Historians will look back on this time as a critical juncture in Boise State's evolution. This first-ever comprehensive campaign is the most ambitious fundraising effort in Boise State's history and, so far, the largest fundraising effort for higher education in the state's history.

With the phenomenal growth of the Treasure Valley; the quality of life it offers; the support Boise State enjoys from the community it serves; the growing stature of the University's faculty, students and academic programs; our enhanced reputation as a first-rate institution of higher learning; and the nationwide recognition our student-athletes have brought us, I am confident we will wage a successful campaign for the resources necessary to achieve distinction in all we do.

There is much at stake in this campaign, not just for Boise State, but also for our entire community and region. Not only are we relied upon to educate future leaders, our academic programs, research, and public service support the area's burgeoning industry and public needs. Donations to this campaign will indeed help provide for the future success of our city and region.

If \$175 million sounds daunting (and it is), I can tell you today that we have partially traveled the road to Destination Distinction. I am pleased to report that while we have been preparing for this day, during what is called the quiet phase of the campaign, we have raised \$70 million. We are very thankful for the gifts from the Micron Technology Foundation, Larry and Karen Arguinchona, Lori and Duane Stueckle, the estate of Jody Demeyer, the John Vallega trust, the Langroise family, Jim Kissler and Norco, the Yanke family and all the supporters of the Caven-Williams Sports Complex, to name just a select few.

We are off to a great start but the journey has only just begun. A steering committee has been selected, a consultant is in place, our internal operations have been established in university advancement and development officers have been working in nearly all of our colleges.

However, this is the ultimate team effort. For the duration of this campaign -- which our consultant tells us may take five years or more -- Boise State is in our care. We will ask each and every one of you to think of ways you can help us reach our goals. Needless to say, I will attempt to lead by example and be anywhere any prospective donor would like to discuss a gift towards the campaign. That may mean you see less of me at campus events, but such is the life of the public university president these days.

In the meantime, it is imperative that we demonstrate to our donors, prospective donors and to leaders in state government, who fund us and hold us accountable, that we will continue to manage our growth wisely and use our resources cost-effectively. In my four years at Boise State, I have never requested funding or gifts from state government or donors that I did not think were absolutely essential for a quality education for our students.

Yet, I know as someone who once served on an appropriations committee and managed a difficult state budget, that it always looks to our friends in government and the private sector as though we spend a lot of time with our hand out for new resources, but less time reviewing our budgets and expenditures; rethinking past decisions that may today be outdated or result in duplication; or assessing class sizes which may be smaller than we can truly afford.

I will be asking my colleagues responsible for overseeing our expenditures to review their operations so we can say that we have eliminated waste and inefficiency and that every dollar raised for this university will be spent wisely and in the best interests of Boise State University students. Perhaps you will have some thoughts on how to make the most convincing case in this regard. If so, please do not hesitate to send them to me, in care of Assistant to the President, Randi McDermott.

Without a doubt, my remarks today represent the most important message of my presidency. As I said earlier, much is at stake for our beloved University and for the people we serve. Please join me in this most exciting assignment as we lift Boise State to the heights that Bishop Barnwell proclaimed when he said, "Someday I will be sitting on a cloud smiling down upon a great university and saying to myself and those around me, 'Just see what I started.'"

You certainly did, Bishop Barnwell and we here in the 21st century are here to finish it for you. On to Destination Distinction!!!

Please join me for the annual president's picnic for faculty and staff, immediately following this address, in the big white tent on the lawn between the SUB and the Appleton Tennis Center. It is our way of saying thanks for all you do and kicking off the new academic year.