

Boise State University
2009 State of the University Address
President Bob Kustra
August 19, 2009

Good morning and welcome!

We generally kick off this annual address with a peaceful and tranquil arrangement performed by some of our talented Music faculty members. This year called for something different. Today we honor another talented member of the Music faculty—David Wells, Marching Band Director for 23 years—who passed away last spring. His legacy will live on every time the band marches onto the Blue. It will also live on in the lives of the many students who benefited from David's teaching, caring and passion for his work.

One of David's former students, Mr. Nathan Stark, will lead the Band this morning and for the rest of this year, as our new visiting band director. Nathan was a member of the Blue Thunder Marching Band in the '90s, two years of which he served as student director. It was during this time he met his wife, who was also a member of the band. Thank you Nathan and welcome back to campus. Ladies and gentleman, the Blue Thunder Marching Band playing one of David Well's favorite selections.

And a warm welcome to all of you—especially our new faculty and staff!

We are delighted to welcome 28 new tenure or tenure-track faculty members, visiting professors, research professors and special lecturers, who hail from prestigious institutions across the globe. We welcome also a number of new staff. Will our new faculty and staff please stand to be recognized?

I want to also introduce Leslie Webb, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, who joined us last December, and who is providing leadership for key student programs and services.

At this address last year, I was proud to introduce the campus community to NASA Astronaut and Educator in Space Barbara Morgan, as she entered her first year as Distinguished Educator in Residence at Boise State. In her first year, she connected our students in the College of Engineering with the NASA Microgravity University program. Led by Barbara and faculty mentors Don Plumlee, Bob Davidson and Jim Browning, a team of Boise State students designed and built an experiment that they were able to test at zero gravity. Let's watch...

Powerpoint Presentation

We are pleased to have the faculty involved in this effort here with us today. Will Barbara Morgan, Jim Browning, Associate Professor in Electrical and Computer Engineering, and Bob Davidson, Assistant Research Professor in Materials Science and Engineering, please join me on stage? (Don Plumlee could not be here today.)

I understand this project was a real team effort, so we wanted to be sure to recognize the students who worked so hard and who represented Boise State so well in this prestigious program. As a small token of our pride and appreciation for your contributions to the Boise State University Lunar Traction Experiment and NASA's Microgravity University Program, we are presenting them with our first ever "Trailblazer Award." As I call your name, please come forward and accept your award.

- Alex Miller: Senior, Material Science and Engineering, from Boise
- Mallory Yates: Junior, Material Science and Engineering, from Sandpoint
- Kyle Knori: Junior, Materials Science and Engineering, from Jackson Hole, Wyoming
- Jacob Forsberg: Senior, Computer Science, from Nampa
- Matt McCrink: Graduate Student, Mechanical Engineering, from Meridian. Matt took on a significant leadership role at the outset of the program, and also happens to be the son of our former Dean of Applied Technology, Vera McCrink

The other members of the team couldn't be here today, but allow me to recognize them as well.

- Jeffrey B. Perkins, Graduate Student, Materials Science and Engineering, from Fort Collins, Colorado
- Travis A. Dean, Senior, Mechanical Engineering, from Boise
- Jason H. Griswold, Junior, Double major in Mechanical Engineering and Pre-Med with Biomedical Engineering minor, from Meridian
- Daniel G. Isla, graduate this past spring in Electrical & Computer Engineering. Originally from Boise, Daniel is now employed at the Jet Propulsion Lab in California
- Ryan S. Bedell, graduate this past spring in Electrical & Computer Engineering. Originally from Nampa, Ryan is now employed at Lutron Electronics in Pennsylvania

Thanks to our honorees for joining us today and for the esteem that you and your fellow students brought to Boise State University. I understand that we have a number of new teams working on projects for submission to this program again this fall, and we wish you continued success.

Having students and professors participate in a project like this one at NASA-- among only eight universities in the nation to be chosen -- is evidence that we are making great strides toward our vision of becoming a metropolitan research university of distinction.

And, if that isn't enough to convince you, I am delighted to share some late-breaking information that should certainly make us sit up and take notice. End of fiscal year reporting reflects substantial growth of research activity at Boise State, providing a powerful indicator of where we are on the road to distinction, and where we are headed.

- At the close of fiscal year 2009, our research awards and sponsored projects increased 32%, or \$9 million dollars, over the prior year.
- This progress makes Boise State's research program the fastest growing in the state of Idaho.

- A total of 268 Boise State research and sponsored projects garnered a university record \$37 million in funding for fiscal year 2009.
- This amount easily eclipses the previous highpoint of \$28 million reached last year.
- Five of the grants awarded in fiscal year 2009 exceeded \$1 million and the average award was \$138,330.
- Our funding from the National Science Foundation grew by 59%.
- Since the year 2000, Boise State has doubled its total amount of research funding.
- The largest grants were \$2,397,994 and \$1,247,005 from the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Centers for three-dimensional technology in advanced sensor systems (Bill Knowlton); \$1.5 million and \$1,290,081 from the Department of Defense for reconfigurable electronics and non-volatile memory research (Kris Campbell); and \$1,247,510 from the Department of Defense for molecular barcodes in the DNA Safeguard Project (Greg Hampikian).
- More than 100 different entities provided sponsored project funding for Boise State investigators, including federal, state and local agencies, private industry, other universities and not-for-profit organizations.

Check out the slide with a sampling of Boise State's additional research highlights from fiscal year 2009

INFO ON SLIDE

- Kasper van Wijk, Center for Geophysical Investigation of the Shallow Subsurface, received \$321,557 from ConocoPhillips to improve the imaging of ground fractures and to optimize drilling during oil and gas exploration.
 - Cheryl Jorcyk, Biology, received \$211,500 from the National Institutes of Health for human breast cancer research.
 - Jennifer Pierce, Geosciences, received \$172,600 from the U.S. Department of the Interior for a collaborative project with Idaho State University and the University of Idaho on fire and erosion in the western rangelands.
 - Jim Browning, Electrical and Computer Engineering, received \$541,607 from the Department of Defense to develop a new generation of "smart" microwave vacuum electron devices (MVEDs) for use in radar, electronic jamming, advanced communications and imaging systems.
 - Paul Dawson, Mechanical and Biomedical Engineering, received \$161,618 from the U.S. Department of Energy for research on forecasting wind energy and grid integration.
 - Dale Russell, Chemistry, received \$74,961 from the U.S. Department of Energy to bring two lab-demonstrated sensors on water contaminants forward for commercial application.
 - Sin Ming Loo, Electronic and Computer Engineering, received \$150,000 from the Federal Aviation Administration to develop commercial indoor sensor technologies for airline cabin air quality.
- Lee Liberty, Center for Geophysical Investigation of the Shallow Subsurface, received \$125,000 from the Idaho Department of Water Resources to study geophysical data from southwest Idaho and advance understanding of aquifers.

While our growing research profile attracts exceptional research faculty and helps to support increased graduate programming, at a place like Boise State, it also provides a unique opportunity for undergraduate students. Our undergraduate students stand shoulder to shoulder with researchers achieving breakthroughs in areas as varied as cancer, wildfire-induced erosion and non-volatile computer memory, to name a few.

Boise State research and sponsored projects also have a tremendous impact on the economy of our state and region. As you can see from the sampling of projects with local impact now on the screen, we contribute substantially to economic development by assuring a highly educated workforce. Boise State is also a significant source of innovation and new knowledge that benefits industry and entrepreneurship. Research conducted across Boise State's campus enhances the development of public policy, art and creative works, public health and a myriad of areas that add to the quality of our lives.

INFO ON SLIDE

- Marc Bechard, Biology, received \$10,000 from the U.S. Department of the Interior to study the effects of development activities on bald eagle breeding success at Lake Cascade.
- Michael Baltzell, Theatre Arts, received \$6,109 from the Boise City Arts Commission for development of Zoo Boise's African Plains exhibit.
- Brett Ingles, Geosciences, received \$55,000 from the Idaho Department of Lands for conversion of the National Fire Plan website to an Idaho State Fire Plan Working Group housed at Boise State.
- Shawn Benner, Geosciences, received \$21,072 from the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality to identify the sources and release mechanisms leading to elevated uranium in the Treasure Valley aquifer, a primary drinking water source.
- Lisa Bostaph, Criminal Justice, received \$20,467 from the Idaho Criminal Justice Commission to develop guidelines that assist Idaho counties in assessing misdemeanor probation practices that reduce recidivism.
- Janet Callahan, Materials Science, received \$191,593 from the U.S. Department of Education for the Idaho SySTEMic Solution, a science, technology, engineering and math learning initiative designed to spur achievement and confidence among elementary-age learners and their teachers.
- George Murgel, Civil Engineering, received \$91,985 from the Idaho Transportation Department to conduct research on concrete sealer products to extend concrete pavement life.
- Elizabeth Hannah, Center for Health Policy, received \$40,000 from United Way of the Treasure Valley to create an evaluation process for its detox center.

As this region's metropolitan university, Boise State must supply the creative energy, discovery tools, technology platforms and research methodologies that are aligned with the economic base of the Treasure Valley and Idaho. And it is our goal, under the direction of our Vice President for Research Mark Rudin, to continue our overall growth in this arena well into the future.

Telling our story is also an important part of increasing our reputation in research and creative activity. One way that our status is conveyed among the higher education community is through the Carnegie Foundation classification. It has become increasingly clear to me the importance of Boise State being designated as a doctoral institution as soon as we can possibly achieve it. In order to get there, we need to add Ph.D. programs, no easy task in this tight economy. Specifically, our goal is to add three in the next three years, in Biomolecular Sciences, Economics and Public Policy. I have asked Provost Sona Andrews to make this a reality and plan to keep this at the top of my priority list in the coming year.

As another way of telling our story, we issued our first ever research magazine, Explore, this past year to highlight work across the campus. We have also begun a series of video snapshots touting the research strengths at Boise State. The exercise of identifying our strengths in research provides a focus for promoting our research programs to various audiences, and also makes apparent those areas with the greatest potential for impact and future success. By providing a window into the university in this way, we can also influence public perception about the importance of research in general and the overall academic excellence of the university. It is not unlike another window to the University provided by our nationally ranked football team. But this is a window to our academic reputation.

And, happily, there are many great stories to tell. A recent example and point of pride is the naming of Alan Heathcock, adjunct professor of English, as the 2009 Carol Houck Smith Scholar at the national Bread Loaf Writers' Conference. Of the 1,800 writers who applied, only 16 were named scholars of fiction, non-fiction or poetry. Heathcock is one of only five named in the fiction genre. Alan is also a 2004 graduate of Boise State's Master of Fine Arts program in fiction. He has been on the English Department faculty for five years and last year was named its Outstanding Faculty Member. He adds this honor to an already impressive list of accomplishments, including a publication in the Harvard Review, having one of his stories added to the Best American Short Stories' list of "100 Distinguished Stories" twice, and receiving the National Magazine Award in fiction, to name just a few.

As our strengths are brought into focus and our accomplishments are publicized, future faculty and students are listening and making decisions about coming to Boise State. Thus far, graduate student enrollment is up 6.8% and first time, degree seeking student admissions are up almost 4%. Final information and figures will be available on the 10th day of the semester. It also bears mentioning that our summer session enrollment was up 10%.

I was really pleased to see stories this week about successful enrollments at our new community college, the College of Western Idaho. CWI provides an important choice for post-secondary education in Southwest Idaho, and the burgeoning enrollments affirm a long-held belief that there were underserved students in our area. I had lunch recently with their new president, Dr. Bert Glandon, who I believe will provide great leadership to our newest community college in Idaho. Student Affairs and Academic Affairs are already working on a plan to ensure a smooth and seamless transition for CWI students who we hope will join us as juniors in 2011.

As an aside, the state of the economy has had some interesting impacts on our numbers this fall. We are up 46% to date in admission of students seeking a second degree. In addition, our financial aid disbursement for fall is up 18.2% to date over last year, and our federal Pell grant disbursements are up 48.2% over last year.

The current recession and its impact on jobs and careers remind us of the importance of offering our students the breadth and depth of programming with choices in academic preparation. I hear parents of students and the students themselves ask more and more these days whether this or that major will lead to employment upon graduation. And I guess you can't blame them in this tough job market.

But it worries me that we will now focus less than ever on the value of an undergraduate education in providing the student with life-long skills that will stand the test of time, survive the downturns in the economy and guarantee not just the first job, but the second, third and fourth jobs when people are forced—or choose—to switch careers.

I also worry that this college-degree-for-employment talk will prevent students from choosing the major of their first choice—where they may excel—only to take the utility major and struggle with a less interesting experience. How many times have we listened to a student's tale of woe, choosing the wrong major and then changing to the more appropriate choice later, but adding time and cost to the completion of the degree? And how many of us in college correctly predicted the course of our careers anyway?

As Idaho's largest university with a strong undergraduate experience, we have a responsibility to educate students, their parents and the larger community on the importance of a well-rounded education. And it is my belief that the humanities are an integral part of a well-rounded education.

Perhaps the greatest determinants of success in organizational life today are critical thinking skills, computational skills and, perhaps most important, the ability to communicate verbally and in writing in an organized, articulate and coherent fashion. We hear much today about the global economy. As educators we have a responsibility, I believe, to also underscore the importance of languages, and cultural and area studies that will help our students understand and navigate the world in which they will live and work.

Our interest in a strong arts and humanities program should range beyond our concern for our own students' futures. As a metropolitan research university, we have another mission in regard to the humanities, especially in light of the coarse and vulgar edge to our culture today that is the antithesis of the order, clarity and insight into life's mysteries oftentimes gained through the appreciation of music and art. We have a responsibility to support and sustain a strong public culture, knowing and understanding the critical role that the humanities played in the history of our nation and the lives of our Founders as they based their revolutionary government on the principles espoused by Enlightenment philosophers.

A classics professor at Yale University summed up quite well the critical role the humanities play in the development of a public culture, especially in the midst of this Great Recession. Professor Kirk Freudenburg suggests that our economic travails have caused consumers, citizens and policymakers caught up in the crisis to question the old assumptions. “As people began to realize that the economic system was in for a bust, old assumptions about the economy and our way of life were dismantled, leaving behind relative confusion and chaos and forcing Americans to re-evaluate their worldviews,” he says. “That’s a kind of de-familiarization that has people wondering about what kind of world we live in—and that is what people in the humanities do.”

Today I am proposing that Boise State take a stand as we did for business and economics, as we did for science and engineering, as we did for the football program and create an Institute for the Arts and Humanities for our students and for the communities, state and nation we serve. Our colleagues at other universities have laid the groundwork for such a venture.

- **The University of Michigan’s Institute for the Humanities** serves as a national and international centerpiece for scholarly research in the humanities and creative work in the arts and brings the voices of the humanities to public life.
- **The Colorado Center for Public Humanities at the University of Colorado**, Denver investigates the public value of the humanities disciplines and directs the engagements of humanities scholars in the communities it serves.
- **The University of California at Santa Barbara’s Public Humanities Initiative** explores and influences the highly diverse roles played by the humanities in contemporary culture and examines the borders that divide academic from popular culture and borders that divide the sciences from the humanities.
- **Ohio State’s Institute for Collaborative Research and Public Humanities** facilitates collaborations between humanities faculty and others across the campus, fosters innovative forms of interdisciplinary education for its students and enables the humanities to serve as a bridge to the community, state and the broader public culture.
- **Vanderbilt’s Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy** is a leader in the national movement to make creativity and expressive life central to campus life and the undergraduate experience.

It is clear from these few examples that there is a movement underway on campuses across America to build support and provide sustenance for the humanities. It remains now for us as colleagues on this campus to recognize the balance that such an initiative would bring to our campus in both a figurative and geographical fashion. On the east end of the campus is a burgeoning science and engineering cluster with a new health sciences building opening up this fall and construction underway on the new building for the Center for Environmental Science and Economic Development. At the western entrance to the campus will be the new building for the College of Business and Economics. And in the center of our campus—where the current COBE building now stands—an Institute for the Arts and Humanities will provide balance to the master plan of the campus in the same fashion that the humanities—literature, history, music, art, religion, philosophy, theatre arts, the classics—provide balance and add perspective to the lives and future careers of our students and those we serve in the community.

One small step has already been taken in this regard. A group of faculty has submitted a proposal that should serve as a first step in defining the scope and nature of such an Institute. Over the course of this year and next, I am hopeful that we can engage the Faculty Senate and faculty across the campus in developing a set of strategic objectives and a plan that will guide and direct us with this project. Time is on our side with this project since the current COBE building will not be vacated until fall 2012 if current plans prevail, but we can begin to build the programmatic infrastructure for the Institute. In the meantime, I will concentrate on how we might attract the interest of donors for such an Institute with particular emphasis on foundation support.

And speaking of donor support, let me provide you with a brief update on our Destination Distinction Campaign. As you can imagine, it has not been easy.

- **Contributions** to date **total \$113,764,205**
(65% of the original goal of \$175,000,000)
- The **Fund for the Future totals \$10,319,194** or
103% of the original goal of \$10,000,000)

Additionally, current and former University employees have sent a powerful message of support for the Destination Distinction campaign through their own charitable giving. Your gifts and pledges total over \$1.5 million to date since the start of the campaign. Twenty seven percent of Boise State's faculty and staff participated in the employee campaign during the 2008-09 academic year, up from eleven percent in the previous academic year.

We will renew the employee campaign this year, with new co-chairs, Vice President for Finance and Administration Stacy Pearson and College of Business and Economics Dean Pat Shannon, leading the way.

Your support with the campaign is especially gratifying considering the state of the economy, which had an impact on operations at Boise State this past year. Due to careful planning and strong enrollment, we were able to hold reductions to academic units to less than 4% despite larger state reductions. Unfortunately, this upcoming year may prove even more challenging in this regard.

Thus far, state revenues are down significantly. In preparation for the difficulties that may lie ahead, we set aside reserves at the beginning of the new fiscal year in the event of a holdback. We also continue to monitor vacant positions, new hires, and travel and procurements centrally and we ask that individual units continue to implement cost saving measures as much as possible. As last year, we will keep you informed through regular written communication and also through open sessions with our Vice President for Finance & Administration, Stacy Pearson. Stacy hopes to have enough information to hold a session in late September. Please watch the campus newsletter and email for an announcement of the date, time and location.

Another important announcement I want to make today is the upcoming accreditation visit by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Boise State receives an accreditation review every ten years, and this is our year. For the past two years, six committees of faculty, staff and students have written Boise State's comprehensive self-study, working with Dr. Jim Munger in the Provost's office. It is an extensive analysis of the University required by the Commission for the review team before their arrival on campus this fall.

In an email to the campus yesterday afternoon, the Provost's office provided a link to the self-study and a link to instructions on how to provide comments. We encourage you to review the study, comment and participate in the campus visit of the review team on October 12-14. Please watch for messages in Update and by email describing how you can get involved.

I look forward to the accreditation review. We have already learned so much about our progress in this decade and it will be a fascinating exercise to hear how outsiders perceive our progress. I am confident that our reviewers will walk away with a clear understanding of the sense of purpose and direction that influences our work on a daily basis. No doubt they will find a very different university than was seen in the last review.

Boise State has morphed into a very large and complex organization with multiple goals and objectives that sometimes seem to conflict with one another as we attempt to serve that teaching master, that research master, that metropolitan master and others that are built into our mission and role. But it is what it is. This is a complex place operating in a rapidly changing world. I feel that we are sometimes too slow to accept and appreciate that fact. And accept it we must as it's the only way we will survive and prosper. The old way of doing things will too often not be the right or best way. Sad but true.

And at those moments when we appear dragged and pulled in various directions, let's never forget what brings all of us to work every morning, no matter what our assignment, no matter how overwhelmed we sometimes feel. Simply put, it is the education of our students so we may send them to a place on the calendar and on the map that we may never see, but a better place because we made a difference in their lives.

On Monday, over 3000 new, first year students will show up for class. Unlike earlier years in Boise State's history when we simply opened the doors and accepted who showed up, we now have the toughest admission standards in our history and the toughest among public universities in Idaho. In recent years, we have also developed an aggressive recruitment strategy seeking Idaho's best and brightest students from across the state, with admissions counselors visiting other Western states to attract high ability students. Given the considerable effort we have made to raise the academic profile of our students and encourage their attendance at Boise State, now more than ever we must re-dedicate ourselves to their success.

A few years ago, I spoke from this podium about some issues our students were having with basic math. Thanks to our Provost and the faculty in the Math Department, especially Doug Bullock, the issue has been addressed and math no longer remains the obstacle it once was to our ability to retain students. In general, although there may be an occasional student or parent

complaint about a class that didn't work for a particular student, I seldom hear complaints about the classroom.

But beyond the classroom, our students have so many opportunities to fall between the cracks, to run up against parking regulations, food service problems, residence hall issues. Once a student has navigated the first year, things will probably fall into place, but let's be particularly sensitive to our newest students, many of them coming to a strange city for the first time, leaving home and experiencing homesickness for the first time. These are the moments in the lives of students when they decide whether they made the right choice. Remember that the retention issue is not just about grades, it's about creating and sustaining a customer-focused campus culture conducive to student success, not only in the classroom, but also in the residence halls, in the student union, in the cafeteria, in the library, in the bookstore.

We may not be the idyllic residential campus. In fact, we should be proud of our metropolitan roots and the opportunities we offer to students who do not live on campus. But regardless of where a student lives, when they are anywhere on our campus, I hope we can be there for them, extending a helping hand when necessary, going out of the way to greet students in the hallway, stepping up to help them with an issue they may have with our far-flung bureaucracy.

And for those of you in offices that serve students directly, you may be the only contact a student has in the course of a day in the university outside the classroom. It is so important to help them feel at home, and to help them feel an important member of the Boise State family when, in fact, our growing campus may appear to them to be a large and impersonal place.

It is my fondest hope that each of you in your own way will have an opportunity to lighten the burden of a new student this year, that you have a chance to befriend a student and help him or her along the way to success at Boise State.

And speaking of our students, the Student convocation is scheduled for this Friday afternoon, August 21, from 3-4pm in the Morrison Center. The ceremony will be followed by a BBQ for students on the Quad. Student Affairs is anticipating a record number of students to attend and faculty are invited and encouraged to participate.

Also as is our tradition, you are invited to the President's Picnic following this address. This year we will be on the Quad, and sack lunches will be served between 11:30-1:30 to accommodate everyone's schedule. However, before you go, I have to offer one gentle reminder—there will be no smoking during the picnic, even though it is outdoors.

As of Monday, the campus is officially Smoke-Free. We are joining more than 300 universities and colleges across the country in this endeavor. The success of this new policy depends on the thoughtfulness, consideration and cooperation of smokers and nonsmokers alike. We have a group of volunteers, known as Fresh Air Advocates, in action as the academic year begins, to provide information and education on the initiative and even provide "quit-kits" to those who are interested.

Have a wonderful year and as always, thanks for all that you do for Boise State!