

2015 State of the University
President Bob Kustra
Boise State University

Welcome! Thanks for making your way over to the Morrison Center this morning. It's great to hold our first week activities in this fantastic venue since it gives me a chance to congratulate Executive Director James Patrick and his staff for all they do to assist with this event, with the new student Convocation to be held late this week, and of course, for all the world-class performing arts events throughout the year. The Morrison Center has been regularly ranked in the top 5 University Theatres in the Pacific Northwest by Venues Magazine - this year, in fact, they were ranked #1 in the **nation**.

Lately I've been asked what accounts for our growing reputation...In the past 12 months, Boise State University:

- Awarded 3,800 graduates with degrees -- a 31% increase over the number just 5 years ago!
- We also launched a College and new School of Public Service.
- We ranked among the elite in many graduate, online, social work, education and business programs. Our College of Education, for example ranked in the top 100 nationally, and #3 in the Northwest, behind only UW and Oregon.
- We engaged in research that helped solve pressing and mysterious problems facing science and technology.
- We named our stadium with an old and revered Boise family name, in a \$12 million dollar deal and a great partnership with Albertsons.
- We worked our way into the top 5% of 587 masters universities in graduate enrollment growth.
- We chatted with space.
- We hosted the President of the United States.
- We were a part of the national conversation.

But don't take my word for it — here's what other people said about Boise State this year:

"Here at Boise State, innovation is a culture that you're building." President Barack Obama

Boise State "is demonstrably on the move." Chronicle of Higher Education

"Boise State has gone big-time, and not just in athletics." Fresno Bee

Boise State also set new bars on and off the fields of play in college athletics:

- winning our third Fiesta Bowl,
- being the only school in the nation to win regular season conference titles in football and basketball (women's basketball too)
- and joining a number of academically revered universities in posting some of the country's highest academic progress scores—including 10 teams scoring a perfect 1,000 in the NCAA's highest measure of academic excellence.

Our women's gymnastics team, for example, scored third highest team **GPA scores in the nation**, breaking previous Boise State records, on their way to winning the 2015 Mountain Rim Gymnastics Conference.

As we reflected on the amazing 3rd Fiesta Bowl, I knew there had been enormous changes throughout our campus during those 8 years between Fiesta Bowl 1 and Fiesta Bowl 3. We prepared a report card, if you will, for a presentation to the State Board of Education earlier this year.

I thought you'd enjoy seeing the growth in some pretty important measures since that great game against the University of Oklahoma:

- **Enrollment** is up 18%
- **Number of degrees** granted up 52%
- **Research grants** and contracts up 39%
- **Number of donors** up 131%
- **Foundation assets** up 59%

I think any university of any size and stature would feel proud to have accomplished what Boise State accomplished in a brief period of time.

These high-profile moments would not have become Boise State's story without the incredible work that has transformed this university into a metropolitan research university of distinction.

- Boise State University will receive more than \$40 million in research grants and awards in a single year for the first time in school history — another incredible milestone in becoming a leader in developing Idaho's economy.
- We have taken our goal to align university programs with workforce needs — working not just with longstanding transformative partners like Micron Technology, but with new ones as well — like the fast-growing software development sector in Downtown Boise. By this time next year, our entire Computer Science Department will be housed just steps away from companies — like Clearwater Analytics — we hope will be clamoring to hire our graduates.
- And we've created a campus environment that takes the best of what we know works well on traditional campuses and supercharges it with the unique attributes we enjoy in the heart of this thriving and beautiful city and the Idaho outdoor lifestyle we all love.

Our orientation program is a great example. Virtually non-existent a short time ago, it is today cutting-edge, immersive and effective. I know, because students and parents often make it a point to tell me. A few of their comments.....:

"You really knocked it out of the park."

"I didn't really know what to expect, but it was so much more than I thought."

"Everything parents and students needed to know was included. I feel 100% confident in sending my daughter to school at your institution. I was so impressed with everyone we met."

I really appreciate how many of you around campus were deeply involved in Boise State's first-ever Bronco Day, held in conjunction with our spring football game. Everyone, including our Colleges and departments, helped us to greet and inspire future Broncos.

The event was an incredible success and one we'll continue to refine for this year and the future. It works best when every department, every faculty and staff member — indeed every one of us — embraces the effort.

By the way, the idea for Bronco Day came to us not from Admissions, as you might expect, but from the very creative Assistant Athletic Director for Football Brad Larrondo. It's a great example of how various departments and programs reach across campus to work together and lift all boats.

The Admissions folks in Student Affairs are currently working on a program they will roll out this fall that will more formally involve faculty in this process. The steps we take to improve student recruitment across the board will pay off for Boise State and our students for years to come. It is everyone's job to recruit.

Our Honors College is welcoming a record class of more than 160 first year students this year—following a 50% increase in Honors College applications this year -- and a record total enrollment of 600 — assuring the best of Idaho's students can excel here at home while also attracting a vibrant and diverse group of out-of-state and international students to raise the bar of excellence in the classroom, the campus, and the Boise community.

Just this month, our trustees on the State Board of Education approved an innovative public-private partnership to build a \$40 million dollar home for Boise State's Honors College in the heart of campus. The new home will include beds for more than 600 Honors and other students, expand on-campus dining options and combine residences with classrooms and social space, creating a living-learning community and is expected to open Fall 2017.

And world-class students aren't the only top-notch individuals being attracted to Boise State. Like Coach Harsin going head-to-head with Alabama, Michigan and USC for top prospects, our deans and department chairs have been going after "Blue Chip" faculty recruits with great success.

Among those we welcome this year are:

- Dr. Paul Simmonds, Assistant Professor in Physics, comes to us from UCLA, where he ran the Integrated NanoMaterials Laboratory.
- NASA Astronaut Steve Swanson – is one of our own as a Professor of the Practice and will increase his role on campus and with our students as a Distinguished Educator in Residence beginning this fall.
- Denis Johnson, the national book award winner who will be a distinguished writer in residence within our outstanding MFA in creative writing program, which is also celebrating the Pulitzer prize of former visiting writer and longtime friend of the university, Tony Doerr.
- Gordon Jones – Dean of the College of Innovation and Design
- Jack Marr, (joining Gordon Jones in CID), founding Director of NYU's Stern School of Business in Shanghai, will have multiple roles on campus utilizing his international expertise.
- Curt Apsey, who we convinced to return to Boise State as our Director of Athletics
- Former San Francisco University leader Corey Cook (who comes to us with degrees from Berkeley and the University of Wisconsin) as the inaugural Dean of Idaho's first and only School of Public Service.

- I would be remiss if I didn't take a minute to thank Shelton Woods for his interim service and yeoman's work transitioning SSPA. Shelton led a team of individuals who made this change appear easy – and it almost never is. They deserve a great deal of credit and acknowledgement for their help with this important change **taking us into the future with our public affairs mission.**
- I also want to give a shout out to the faculty who proposed the new School.

And while we are talking about new colleagues who will make a difference, I want to take a moment to thank and recognize someone who has made a tremendous difference in Boise State's transformation to date;

- Rod Lewis, who served as an outstanding member of the State Board of Education - our Board of Trustees - for 15 years is here with us today, along with his better half, Charlotte.
- I counted on his counsel more times than you can imagine. He championed the vision for Boise State with the Board and other elected officials and industry. He has been a key player in the successes and transformations we have seen in the last 12 years at Boise State.
- And he managed those 15 years of service all the while serving as Micron's General Counsel, with an incredible travel schedule. The SBOE travel only added to that with meetings across the state so there was considerable sacrifice on Charlotte's part as well.
- Rod and Charlotte have also become good and treasured friends to Kathy and me. Rod and Charlotte will you stand to accept our appreciation?

Rod and his fellow board members challenged us in many ways over the years, including making sure we're serving our students and Idaho citizens through well-balanced offerings and programs. For Boise State, this means an increased emphasis on STEM programs.

And that brings us to good news to celebrate today. Not long after President Obama was elected, he kicked off a national campaign to increase the number of students graduating college or university in STEM fields.

By 2011, when we checked to see how Boise State fared when compared to the national percentage of STEM graduates, we found only 11% of our undergraduate students were STEM graduates, compared to the national average of 15-16%.

Our Provost set a goal of reaching 15% in five years and I am delighted to report today we have reached our goal two years ahead of Marty's plan. We now have the programming in place to play our role in this national effort to increase STEM production.

And in looking at our overall distribution of majors and graduates, you can see we have considerable balance among disciplines.

We must remain a university that embraces the critical, historical and contextual thinking the liberal arts provide our future citizens — but one that also recognizes the challenges graduates are facing in the workforce. That's why we're launching phase 1 of '**Bridge to Career**' this spring— a series of online courses designed to give non-business majors the kind of know-how and understanding to give them a leg up when competing for jobs.

And when talking about Bridge to Career, it's not a one-way street educating liberal arts students lacking in technical skills. Phase Two will offer our STEM majors an array of bridge courses such as communications, team building, accounting, marketing and leadership training to also give them important competencies in their chosen career.

But no matter how much we adapt our academic offerings to reflect workforce needs, I've been in higher education long enough to know trends in what employers say they need are cyclical.

Last year, you couldn't pick up a news story about employment opportunities without reading about the STEM advantage for college graduates. But just a few weeks ago, Forbes ran a column highlighting the value of a liberal arts education in the tech marketplace.

I understand there are some among you who may not appreciate what you think is our preoccupation with job skills and requirements. What happened to the good ole' days, you might say, when folks understood and appreciated the intrinsic value of a university degree and the learned status it conferred on the graduate, but when we didn't place as much emphasis on aligning what we teach with what it takes to be successful after graduation.

Well, here's one thing that's changed. There is a new normal operating in the lives of our graduates and it is increased student debt thanks to the need to compensate for the loss of state funding over recent years. The Federal Reserve even reports it's affecting the volume of home ownership as many college grads cannot afford to buy a home because of student debt. With the exception of our financial aid office, I'm not sure we have internalized the profound crisis this creates for our students.

If we're to preserve certain majors known today for poor transition to the workforce, then we better get to work on augmenting the major with training and education that helps our students find gainful employment to deal with their debt loads.

If we are to survive and thrive, we must adapt to trends in educational needs and we must provide value to our students.

And as I say we must adapt and provide value, I must tell you on a daily basis I see how many of you are already doing just that.

I thought I should share those with you but the list was too long. So here's a Top Ten list of Great Things Going on at Boise State that I had nothing to do with!

#10: Nearly half of Idaho Business Review's Accomplished 40 Under 40 Honorees are Boise State graduates.

#9: Boise State just completed the largest summer enrollment ever – with over 9,000 students enrolled in classes – and over 40% of the activity taking place online!

#8: The Talkin' Broncos argued their way to a third straight national title.

#7: Engineering Dean Amy Moll selected as one of 2015's Inspiring Women in STEM awards by Insight Into Diversity magazine.

#6: Political scientist Justin Vaughn received national attention for a paper he co-authored on presidential "greatness," and worked with the New York Times for an internationally read and argued-over look at the best and worst "post-presidencies" in American history.

#5: Online Educational Technology graduate program grows to what we believe is the largest in the world — almost entirely with out-of-state students. This year, to boost educational abilities around Idaho, they are launching a \$1,000 scholarship to any Idaho teacher who begins the program.

#4: Boise State University will be Idaho's host for the rare Shakespeare First Folio. The Folio is touring to just one place in each state. Thanks to the Albertsons Library staff for landing this opportunity for us! When it arrives next year, the library will install a display at the Arts and Humanities Institute at the Yanke Family Research Center for ease of access by the public.

#3: Scott Willison and Greg Martinez were awarded a five-year federal grant worth \$1.1 million dollars to continue their work helping first-generation and low-income students to become teachers.

#2: Master's in Social Work program named No. 1 in the nation by GraduatePrograms.com

And #1 in this Top 10 list (even though all 10 are equally great accomplishments!): Jane Chu, chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, recently visited Boise State to hear about Leslie Durham's and Amanda Ashley's research on universities as cultural anchors in the Intermountain West. Ashley and Dunham study reinforces that arts programs are producing people who become major players in the creation and expansion of what makes Boise distinct in the nation. Case in point: The Mayor's art and history awards from this year were nearly exclusively given to graduates, faculty and others with Boise State connections — and the most recent statewide Idaho Triennial juried exhibit at the Boise Art Museum included a vast majority of artists with Boise State ties.)

Their project could not be more timely.

- One of our main priorities this past year with the State Legislature was funding for our **Center for Fine Arts**. I'm pleased to report they dedicated \$2.5 million for it and we hope for another \$2.5 million this coming year. The Center, near the university's front door on Capital Boulevard, will house the state's premier arts programs and become a new cultural hub here in our metropolitan home. Fundraising for the building has not been easy, but we continue to work hard to gain private funding for the Center.
- The **Center for Materials Science Research** will bolster our growing science and technology cluster of innovation on the south end of campus. Can't say too much about this project yet except -- it's exciting and you'll hear more about it in the near future.
- This fall, watch parts of the **Albertsons Library** (already a vibrant and vital center of campus) evolve in unexpected ways as it houses the College of Innovation and Design and its Gaming, Interactive Media and Mobile program. Kudos to Dean Tracy Bicknell-Holmes for her work in fostering a hands-on learning environment in our library by opening a maker lab complete with 3D printing and other technology.
- Throughout the year, keep an eye on the southeast side of campus as the **Alumni and Friends Center** takes shape — this will help Boise state continue to build a lifetime of engagement with the graduates and supporters who are lifetime Broncos. The Alumni Center

would not have happened without the vision, hard work and generosity of Allen and Dixie Dykman.

And now, let's talk a little about what happens inside these buildings. Let's talk about the classroom.

I recently read an article in the New York Times that pointed out it may not matter how many new colleges you launch, how many world-renowned experts and faculty you attract, how many research dollars you spend — if your university is not what **Kevin Carey with the New America Foundation** calls a “coherent academic enterprise with consistent standards of classroom excellence.”

And, depressingly, study after study shows very few universities would qualify for that description. The problem for students, Carey wrote, “it is all but impossible to know ahead of time which part of the disunified university is which.”

While the university is branded as a whole, it is largely decentralized in its most important component or product – the delivery of an education. Quality, methods, focus, and more can and do vary from department to department and from unit to unit. It is intrinsic to our system, to the extreme variation in the requirements and style of academic fields of study, and to the concept of shared governance.

But there can be no variance in the goal of exacting the highest quality in each College, Department or unit. That should and must be the standard of every department chair and indeed in each of us in our daily efforts.

And if it's true, as it's been said, that universities are “a series of individual faculty entrepreneurs held together by a common grievance over parking” — then we know where the real innovations and adaptations to changing student and economic needs have to take place.

Quite simply: Are we teaching like we should be in 2015?

We must continually find new and effective ways to bridge the old disciplinary boundaries that no longer define what will be expected from our graduates. Leadership in this arena is expected from Gordon Jones and the College of Innovation and Design, but also of every dean, department chair and faculty member of our campus.

But as we innovate and adapt, we must hold ourselves to the highest level of scrutiny as we move ahead. All of us at Boise State knew we had to re-imagine how we delivered general education and the so-called “soft” skills of communication, critical thinking, teamwork and creativity we and employers know are important for college graduates. Thus was born the Foundational Studies program.

And while we know a good number of our Foundational Studies courses are addressing this need effectively, I've heard questions or criticisms – especially from students and their parents. They've suggested that in trying to deal with the “soft” issues, we went too soft, if you will, providing more style than substance. This is why Provost Schimpf has asked the faculty senate to explore the criticisms and the outcomes of this vital program, and if it needs refocusing or fixing, to fix it. I look forward to their work.

We can develop a liberal arts experience with the footprint of a metropolitan research university — and we must.

And we must differentiate ourselves. We are already doing so in many ways – with the creation of the new College of Innovation and Design, our bridge to career program, an enhanced honors college experience, stellar research advances, and events like BroncoDay – but we can always do more.

I have challenged each Dean, and extend this challenge to all of you – what is our next “Big Idea” – what will differentiate Boise State and the student experience at Boise State from our peers? What are the big problems our society faces and how can we as a campus prepare our students to address these issues?

One important idea relates to the health and fitness of our staff, faculty and students. Tim Dunnagan and his team proposed a program to help all of us become and stay healthy.

While I don’t think we’ll all be doing yoga on the Blue, I asked Dean Dunnagan to come today and share information about an important new initiative called – most appropriately – Bronco Fit.

College of Health Sciences Dean, Tim Dunnagan:

Consider what you would ideally want someone who was 70 years old to say about their time as a student at Boise State? What would the students want to say? There will be many similar responses but our hope with this initiative is that students will report that they are healthier because of what they learned and developed at Boise State... in fact, their family, friends and community are healthier because of what they learned at Boise State.

Think of what it is like for a 17 year old student to make health decisions. What we fundamentally want to be able to do is generate graduates who are savvy consumers of health over a 4 year period. For this to happen think of the policies, built environment, behaviors that need to be generated for these changes to take place. In addition to creating the programming and environment for health we also want to capture what interventions and changes took place and why... this is a simple statement but a very challenging thing to do (both from a programming and evaluation standpoint). We will open this program to all on campus and will also need help from students and faculty/staff from disciplines across Boise State to pull this programming and evaluation off.

- Free Health Screenings for faculty and staff*
- Restructure of the COHS... UHS*
- Health 101*
- Partnership with Health and Welfare, Health Wise*
- BSPH with CEH and COBE*
- Care coordination UHS*
- Wellness Director UHS*

An organizational meeting for the effort will be held on September 21. I welcome your participation.

Thank you Tim!

Efforts like what Tim has described will pay off long term for our students – and for many will also contribute to their decision to attend Boise State as we become known as one of the healthiest campuses around. But this is not just for students. This program is meant for us all and I hope and expect all campus units will participate.

We have seen many changes in our student population in recent years with major increases in incoming GPAs and full time students. I want to leave you with a small look at what your efforts have achieved and what exciting times remain ahead of us.

As one example of how diverse and far-reaching our incoming students have become, the number of out of state members in our Blue Thunder Marching Band has doubled, just since 2011. Our band members now hail from 20 states. And I don't think Kathy and I have been to a football game in the last two or so years without someone complimenting us on how great our marching band is!

In just two days, the Boise State University incoming class of **2019** and many of their parents will be overflowing this very space for the Convocation and subsequent march to Albertson Stadium to form the B on the Blue (if you have never had a chance to watch this, I encourage you to do so on Friday. It's a lot of fun and you can watch from the stands starting at around 3:45pm.)

Among those new students will be

- **Jordan McAllister**, valedictorian of Graham-Kapowsin High School in Washington, plans to major in biology before going to medical school to become a cardiologist.
- **Spokane native Mia Sanchez** overcame what she calls a “bad decision” that got her suspended as a freshman to graduate with a 4.0 as the valedictorian — and senior class president — of Rogers High School.
- **Lakeside High School salutatorian Brook Chic** from Plummer, Idaho. She comes to us not just a high school graduate — she earned her associate's degree at the same time through North Idaho College.
- **Leslee Fiene from a small town in Nebraska** — Leslie's father passed away the summer before her senior year, so she organized a series of blood drives in her hometown in his memory while she worked on her plan to attend Boise State and major in international business.
- **Lillian Cates**: Student body president at STAR Prep Academy, a school for the gifted and talented in Los Angeles. She won high school awards in math, music, foreign language, history and citizenship. Tutors elementary age students. Volunteers at church. Teaches mixed martial arts! And performed as a musician at some of the coolest venues in LA.
- **Elena Paz Munoz**: Senior class president and valedictorian from her high school in Honduras. Captain of the soccer team. Studied abroad in Germany for a year and is fluent in English, Spanish and German. As a volunteer, translated for visiting dentists to help explain procedures and care for children. Three-time national spelling bee winner.
- **Gregory Wischer**: Graduating at the top of his class in Grand Forks, North Dakota. President of his chapter of the National Honors Society. Volunteer for the Salvation Army, the Special Olympics, his church, his local senior center. Multiple state

championships in tennis — and winner of sportsmanship awards for his demeanor on and off the court.

- **Henry Shafer-Coffey:** Captain of the Boise High School swim team. Editor of the school newspaper. National Honor Society. Debate team. Volunteers at the YMCA and The Cabin. Active in a lot of clubs. Perhaps most impressively, helped create a classic book seminar that has run regularly for three years at Boise High School, introducing students to Steinbeck, Vonnegut and more.

News of such student talent in our midst challenges all of us to bring our best game to the 2015 semester.

For those of us who call higher education our chosen profession, we've been given a heady responsibility – to reach into an unknown future by touching the lives of those we meet in the classroom and across campus. We help shape their destinies and the fate of our nation and planet in a way few on this earth have a chance to do.

On with the challenge, and thanks for all you do!