Foundational Addresses
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The First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Board of Trustees of Ricks College announce that Ricks College will change from its present two-year junior college status to a four-year institution. The new four-year school will be known as Brigham Young University-Idaho, with the name change designed to give the school immediate national and international recognition. The memory of Thomas E. Ricks will continue to be appropriately honored and perpetuated.

This change of status is consistent with the ongoing tradition of evaluation and progress that has brought Ricks College from infant beginnings to its present position as the largest privately owned two-year institution of higher education in America. With some additions and modifications, the physical facilities now in place in Rexburg are adequate to handle the new program. Undoubtedly, some changes to the campus will be necessary. However, they will be modest in nature and scope.

BYU-Idaho's move to four-year status will be phased in over a period of time and accomplished in such a way as to preserve the school's autonomy and identity. Adjustments to its mission will be minimal. The school will have a unique role in and be distinctive from the other institutions of higher education within the Church Educational System. For the immediate future, the president of BYU-Idaho will report directly to the Commissioner of the Church Educational System.

BYU-Idaho will continue to be teaching oriented. Effective teaching and advising will be the primary responsibilities of its faculty, who are committed to academic excellence.

The institution will emphasize undergraduate education and will award baccalaureate degrees; graduate degree programs will not be offered. Faculty rank will not be a part of the academic structure of the new four-year institution.

BYU-Idaho will operate on an expanded year-round basis, incorporating innovative calendaring and scheduling while also taking advantage of advancements in technology which will enable the four-year institution to serve more students. In addition, BYU-Idaho will phase out its involvement in intercollegiate athletics and shift its emphasis to a year-round activity program designed to involve and meet the needs of a diverse student body.

Of necessity, the new four-year institution will be assessing and restructuring its academic offerings. Predictably, the school will need to change and even eliminate some long-standing and beneficial programs as the school focuses upon key academic disciplines and activities.

Specific programmatic details about and timelines for the change are presently being worked out. These details, which will be discussed with and approved by the Board of Trustees, will be announced at appropriate times in the future.

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Announcement: Ricks College to Become BYU-Idaho

President Gordon B. Hinckley
President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Brigham Young University-Idaho
June 21, 2000
Inaugural Response

President David A. Bednar
President of Ricks College
Ricks College
February 27, 1998

President and Sister Hinckley, honored guests, students and colleagues of Ricks College, my brothers and sisters.

I am honored and humbled by the charge and responsibility I have received today from the President of the Church. The invitation from the Brethren to become the fourteenth president of Ricks College was unexpected and has been a great blessing in my life and for our family. One does not aspire to or apply for a position such as this. My only qualifications for this sacred stewardship are a willingness to work and a desire to learn.

President Hinckley, I accept your charge and pledge to work with all of my heart, might, mind, and strength to achieve the goals you have outlined. I appreciate and will strive to be worthy of the trust the Brethren and the Board of Trustees have expressed in me and our family through this invitation to serve. This is the most exciting and overwhelming invitation I have ever received.

Not only was the invitation to serve as the president of Ricks College unexpected for our family, it was surprising to some people who have known me. I recently received an interesting email message from the daughter of one of my Primary teachers. Back in the days when I attended Primary, it was held once a week in the afternoon following school. I remember riding every week with a number of my friends to Primary with Sister Gladys Cheney, our teacher. Apparently, I have forgotten much of what transpired during those weekly trips to Primary. The email message I received from Sister Cheney’s daughter included the following statement:

My mom really wanted to write you a letter because she has been following your life’s progress through the years in the Church News. She is so proud of you and wanted to let you know that, but did not quite know where to begin. I told her I would write you a quick letter, and that was fine with her. She chuckles every time she thinks of those rides to Primary and how well you’ve turned out.

Clearly, the invitation to serve at Ricks surprised the one Primary teacher who undoubtedly knew me the best!

Brothers and sisters, I have been taught since my youth to “follow the prophet.” Never in my wildest imagination, however, did I ever think I would speak in the same meeting with and literally “follow the prophet” as I have been assigned to do today. I pray for and invite the spirit of the Holy Ghost to be with us during our time together, that I may appropriately express the feelings of my heart and that we may understand each other and be edified on this special occasion.

In the few minutes I have to speak with you today, I would like to achieve two major objectives: (1) to express appreciation to some very special people and (2) to speak about the future of Ricks College.

I would like to begin by expressing appreciation to my wife, Susan. Next month Sister Bednar and I will have been married for 23 years. We have now reached the point in our lives where we have been married longer than we were single. Other than my time in the mission field in Southern Germany, I really do not remember very much about what it was like to live without her.

Susan is a virtuous woman and a righteous mother. Purity and goodness are reflected in her countenance. Indeed, she is receiving His image in her countenance (Alma 5:14). I love her and appreciate the complementary influence she is in my life. I thank her for the woman she is and the lessons she has taught me. All that is good in my life has come because of and with her.

In our marriage we have been blessed with three sons: Eric will soon be 22, Mike is about to turn 20, and in a few weeks Jeff will be 16. No mom and dad could be more pleased than we are with these precious sons. Susan and I have become one through these young men, and we have learned much in the process of attempting to teach and rear them. They are wonderful boys, certainly not perfect boys, but they are very good boys.

Let me share with you just one quick story about our sons. We lived for many years in Fayetteville, Arkansas, while I was employed as a business professor at the University of Arkansas. We were and still are avid Arkansas Razorback basketball fans. We had season tickets and enjoyed attending almost every home game. A few years ago the featured game of the season, No. 1 UNLV versus No. 2 Arkansas, was scheduled to be played on a Sunday afternoon. We had a long-standing tradition in our family of not participating in little league, soccer, basketball, or other sports events on Sunday, nor did we attend or watch sports on Sunday. In our family council meeting the week before the game, Susan and I asked Eric, Mike, and Jeff what they thought we should do with our tickets. The unanimous decision we reached was to sell the priceless tickets...
to one of our neighbors. I will never forget Mike saying to me immediately after the closing prayer in our family council, “Dad, hurry up and sell those tickets before I change my mind!” They really are very good boys.

Eric and Jeff are present with us today. Mike is serving as a missionary in Bolivia. We are confident that he is aware of and participating in the special spirit of this occasion.

I express appreciation to my mom and dad, both of whom are deceased. I am thankful for their sacrifices in my behalf, and I hope they are aware of the events of this day.

I also am thankful for Sue’s parents, Kay and Nyla Robinson. I love them as I love my own parents and appreciate their love and support.

Finally, I am thankful for many other relatives, friends, and colleagues, too numerous to mention, who have influenced me in positive ways. I appreciate the contribution each of you has made to my life.

Now I would like to spend a few minutes visiting with you about the future of Ricks College. As we prepare for and move into the next century, we at Ricks College are embarking upon a voyage that will be filled with high adventure. Sweeping changes are occurring around and along our “charted course,” (J. Reuben Clark, Jr., “The Charted Course of the Church in Education,” The Improvement Era, September 1938, Volume 41, Number 9, pp. 520-575) both in our sponsoring institution, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and in the world of education. The rapid growth of the Church throughout the world will require us to be ever better stewards of the sacred resources and support we receive. And the changes presently taking place in institutions of higher education around the world are nothing short of revolutionary. New technologies, innovative pedagogies, and more sophisticated students are challenging us to rethink and reevaluate many of our most fundamental assumptions about the processes of learning and teaching.

These and many other changes will cause us to move out of our established “comfort zones” and confront a series of apparent contradictions and paradoxes. For example, it will be necessary for us at Ricks College to remain the same even as we change. The “Spirit of Ricks,” the unique combination of spirituality and supportiveness that characterizes the interaction among students, faculty, and staff on this campus, must be preserved and enhanced even in the midst of dramatic changes in how we accomplish the work of education. It will be necessary for us at Ricks College to serve ever better the thousands of students we have on campus while simultaneously reaching out to bless the lives of tens of thousands of young Latter-day Saints throughout the world. We have an ever increasing responsibility to use the resources of this great campus to assist in the building of the kingdom of God in all of the world.

It will be necessary for us at Ricks College to move forward rapidly even as we pause to thoroughly assess and evaluate our existing programs and our present use of physical space.

The swift currents of change along our route will not cease temporarily for us to make unobstructed and safe midcourse corrections. Rather, as we navigate, we must remain fixed upon the instruction we receive from the Board and our own specific mission statement to guide us through turbulent waters.

Along our charted course we will undoubtedly encounter many potential perils and unseen obstacles. It is a wonderful feeling of security and safety to know that we are under the leadership of a pilot who knows the course the ship is sailing. William R. Sloan, president of the Northwestern States Mission, shared the following observations and experience in general conference many years ago:

I have rejoiced in my acquaintance with the leadership of this Church. I am thrilled beyond all words of expression for this acquaintance with them and bear witness that they are men of integrity and men of God.

Last summer it was our pleasure to visit Alaska. We took the inland route, and you who have enjoyed that wonderful voyage know that the channels you go through, in many cases, are very narrow. One evening the pilot invited Sister Sloan and myself into the pilot room. As we sailed along the narrow channel, he pointed out to us and said, “I want you people to note that just on the opposite side, on the right side of the boat [and the boat was moving very slowly] a few feet underneath the water, about eight or ten feet from the vessel, there is a great ledge of rock. Many a ship has struck the same and been sunk.”

So it is an inspiration to know in this Church that God is at the helm, and that his servants are inspired, directed and led by his influence. (William R. Sloan, Conference Report, April 1932, p. 17)

I testify that as we follow the direction of our inspired Board of Trustees, we will steer clear of the dangers, both seen and unseen, that could impede our progress towards our desired spiritual and educational destinations.

The mission of Ricks College is clear and unchanging. Our efforts and resources are aimed at educating the whole man and woman, to focus upon the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical development of every student who studies on this campus. Specifically, the mission of Ricks College is to (1) build testimonies of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and encourage living its principles, (2) provide a quality education for students of diverse interests and abilities, (3) prepare students for further education and employment, and for their roles as citizens and parents, and (4) maintain a wholesome academic, cultural, social, and spiritual environment.

Elder John A. Widtsoe described the importance of this kind of comprehensive approach to education:

…let me say again, that to be merely mentally trained is to be only partly trained. The man whose mind only
This statement is found in a book entitled “The Founding of Harvard College” and describes many of the basic principles upon which that great institution was founded. Clearly for us to maintain a clear focus upon the holistic education of young men and women. As I quote the following statement, I invite you to surmise the institution being referred to:

Let me provide one additional example of how important it is to maintain a clear focus upon the holistic education of young men and women. As I quote the following statement, I invite you to surmise the institution being referred to:

Let every student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3), and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning…Every one shall so exercise himself in reading the Scriptures twice a day, that he shall be ready to give such an account of his proficiency therein, both in theoretical observations of the language, and logic, and in practical and spiritual truths, as his tutor shall require, according to his ability; seeing the entrance of the word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple. (“The Founding of Harvard College,” America, Vol. 2, pg. 155-156)

This statement is found in a book entitled “The Founding of Harvard College” and describes many of the basic principles upon which that great institution was founded. Clearly for us at Ricks College, maintaining a clear focus upon our central mission will be essential as we sail into the uncertain waters of a new century.

For the past several months, I have been intrigued by and diligently studying the account in the Book of Mormon of Lehi’s family and their travels in the wilderness. As they reached the place called Bountiful, which was located near the sea, Nephi was commanded by the Lord to:

...construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry thy people across these waters. (1 Nephi 17:8)

Brothers and sisters, the more I reflect upon this verse, the more interesting it becomes to me. Nephi was not a sailor. He had been reared in Jerusalem, an inland city, rather than along the borders of the Mediterranean Sea. It seems unlikely that he knew much about or had experience with the tools and skills necessary to build a ship. He may not have ever previously seen an ocean-going vessel. In essence, then, Nephi was commanded and instructed to build something he had never built before in order to go someplace he had never been before. May I suggest that Nephi’s experience in building that ship is a model for us at Ricks College as we prepare for and move into the next century. We, too, must build something we have never built before in order to go someplace we have never been before.

Nephi further describes the process of constructing the ship:

...and we did work timbers of curious workmanship. And the Lord did show me from time to time after what manner I should work the timbers of the ship. (1 Nephi 18:1; emphasis added)

Two points stand out in my mind about this verse. First, the manner of workmanship was curious. It is interesting that the phrase “curious workmanship” is used five times in the Book of Mormon: once in the testimony of the eight witnesses, twice in relation to the Liahona, once in relation to the productivity of a righteous and prosperous people, and in the verse I have just quoted in relation to the manner whereby Nephi would build the ship. The word curious in these contexts does not mean strange or weird or odd. Rather, it connotes careful, skilled, expert, and deliberate. Clearly the concept of “curious workmanship” sets a standard for us at Ricks College as we move forward to meet the challenges before us.

Second, the phrase “time to time” suggests to me that Nephi perhaps did not receive everything he needed to know about shipbuilding as he began his task. Apparently he received the necessary knowledge “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little” as it was needed. This may be one of the first recorded instances of a just-in-time learning process.

Now please note with me the description Nephi provides in verse 4 of chapter 18.

And it came to pass that after I had finished the ship, according to the word of the Lord, my brethren beheld that it was good, and that the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine; wherefore, they did humble themselves again before the Lord. (1 Nephi 18:4; emphasis added)

Even Nephi’s brothers, who initially opposed the idea of constructing the ship and who were reluctant to help, ultimately had to acknowledge the “goodness” of the finished product.

I know, brothers and sisters, that we will be guided and directed by Him whose school this is as we respond to the challenge to build an educational ship of curious workmanship. As we at Ricks College construct our ship and travel according to the coordinates set by the Board and identified in our mission statement, Ricks College will become increasingly different from and distinctive among other institutions of higher education. Surely, we must build this ship after the
manner which the Lord will show unto us and not after the manner of men. Our standards and practices indeed will be unique, and we will be “set apart” from the world.

I anticipate that we will be the focus of both flattery from the prominent and scorn from the many mocking voices originating in the “great and spacious building,” which Nephi described as the pride of the world. Those taunting voices will counsel us to “chill out,” “loosen up,” “stop being so old-fashioned,” and to “get in step with the ‘90s.” Some may mistakenly believe that we can chart our future course by comparing ourselves to the patterns and practices of the world. Certainly, we might rationalize, we are doing well because our standards are so much different from those generally found in the world.

Brother and sisters, please do not misunderstand the point I am attempting to make. There is much in our world that is “lovely, praiseworthy, and of good report.” And there are many professionals, craftspeople, and artists who greatly bless and enrich our lives through their diligence and intelligence. The Church and its related institutions do not have a monopoly on goodness. However, through the Restoration in these latter days, we do have the fullness of the Savior’s gospel, and the standard of progress we must apply is not to be found in comparisons to the perverse and misguided patterns and practices of the world. If it were, then comparing ourselves to the world would permit us to feel safe and secure while slipping ever deeper and deeper into what Nephi described as the river of filthiness. Rather, the standards come from and are established by the Lord. They do not change or vary, and they will be increasingly distinctive and, some will say, outdated in an ever more secularized and hedonistic world. May I suggest that those scornful voices will be one of the surest indicators that we are following precisely the proper coordinates on our voyage. The very fact that the world may say we should “loosen up” will be a confirmation that we are following the correct course.

Thus far I have highlighted the challenges and changes before us, and the fixed points of prophetic vision and a clear understanding of our mission that will provide direction for us during this voyage. I would now like to focus upon several fundamental principles that should be at the heart of all we are and do at Ricks College. Our planning and decisions and programs and activities should be focused upon and give emphasis to these basic principles.

1. TRUE TEACHING IS DONE BY AND WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

All truth, spiritual as well as secular, is manifested through the spirit of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is a revelator, a teacher, a comforter, and a sanctifier. To create an environment where the Holy Ghost can teach, everything done at Ricks College must be in harmony with the principles of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. As Elder Parley P. Pratt explained concerning the man or woman who is taught by the Holy Ghost:

His mind is quickened, his intellectual faculties are aroused to intense activity. He is, as it were, illuminated. He learns more of divine truth in a few days than he could have learned in a lifetime in the best merely human institutions in the world. (Key to the Science of Theology, pg. 59-60)

And as President Brigham Young taught:

It [the Holy Ghost] shows them things past, present, and to come. It opens the vision of the mind, unlocks the treasures of wisdom, and they begin to understand the things of God…. They comprehend themselves and the great object of their existence. (Journal of Discourses, 1:241)

2. EVERY PERSON AT RICKS COLLEGE IS A TEACHER.

Everyone at Ricks College—faculty, staff, students, ecclesiastical leaders, and so forth—has a responsibility to impact others for good. Each interaction with a student or colleague is a potential teaching and learning opportunity. Let me provide two examples of what I mean by this principle.

My first example of this principle is the faculty of Ricks College. We presently have 353 full-time teaching faculty on this campus. These dedicated teachers have provided a total of 5,209 years of service to the youth of the Church at Ricks College. Consider the impact for good of those years of faithful service in the lives of thousands, tens of thousands, and even millions of individuals and families throughout the world. The talents of these teachers easily would have enabled them to hold positions of prominence, prestige, and financial reward far beyond anything they have experienced at Ricks College. Yet they have chosen to forego those opportunities to live and work in Rexburg, Idaho, and serve the young people of the Church. These competent and dedicated faculty members could be elsewhere but love to teach and work and serve at Ricks College.

My second example highlights how non-faculty employees at Ricks College also serve as teachers. I recently was assigned to preside at the Brigham City Utah West Stake conference. The stake president, Michael Dustin, is a graduate of Ricks College. President Dustin came to Ricks College in 1968 with no place to live and not knowing what to expect of college or of himself. President Dustin found a job on campus and was assigned to shovel snow and clean around the girls dorms. He was hired and supervised by Brother DaVawn Beattie. Today Brother Beattie is the supervisor of Grounds and the Motor Pool at Ricks College. It was obvious as I talked with President Dustin that he had a great regard and love for Brother Beattie. In fact, President Dustin named his youngest son Beattie Dustin as a tribute to DuVawn.
I asked President Dustin what DaVawn had done to have such a profound impact on his life and why he would name his son after him. He gave the following answers:

DaVawn gave me direction in my life and helped me learn how to implement into my everyday life the things I was learning in my classes. He helped strengthen my testimony. He built us up and told us we were doing a good job. He was a friend and someone I could talk to.

When I was unsure about continuing in school, he taught me this principle: *If you get an education, you can more effectively serve the Lord.* That principle changed my life, and I have since taught it to many other adults and young people.

DaVawn is but one example of the hundreds of wonderful employees at Ricks College who also serve and bless students. Brother Beattie, you may not have attended college or received a degree; but in the curriculum of the eternities, you indeed have earned a Ph.D. You have not been assigned to be a classroom teacher at Ricks; however, in the things that matter most, you are an example of the first-class teaching that takes place at this college. Every person at Ricks College is a teacher.

**3. THE MOST EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES OCCUR “ONE BY ONE.”**

Perhaps the defining characteristic of the Savior’s ministry was His ability to teach “one by one.” For example, following His resurrection, He visited the Nephites on the American continent. He invited the 2,500 gathered near the temple in the Land of Bountiful to come forward “one by one” to feel the prints in His hands and feet and to thrust their hands into His side (3 Nephi 11). In one of the most moving stories in all of holy writ, He blessed the children “one by one” (3 Nephi 17). He touched and tutored His Nephite disciples “one by one” (3 Nephi 18; 3 Nephi 28).

This same principle manifests itself today in the worldwide labors of proclaiming the gospel, which is carried out “one by one,” and of redeeming the dead, as saving ordinances are provided “one by one.”

Ricks College is uniquely positioned as an institution of higher education to show and lead the way in applying the principle of “one by one.” This college is legendary for the individualized and nurturing attention given to students by the faculty and staff. Some people on campus candidly have shared with me their concerns that the growth in our student body and technological changes may inhibit our ability to provide “one by one” support in the future. Let me now emphasize an important point just as forcefully as I can. New technologies and innovative pedagogies at Ricks College cannot and will not replace the special powers of people in the processes of learning and teaching. Technology is not an educational panacea. In fact, some supposed technological advances seem to create as many, if not more problems than they solve. However, technology can and should play a supporting and complementing role in our work of educating. If we are wise, we will learn to use technology and the other advancements at our disposal to greatly enhance both the opportunities and effectiveness of our “one by one” teaching. I believe this principle in particular will distinguish us from other institutions of higher education and will in large measure define our educational ship of curious workmanship. We at Ricks College will be both high-tech and high-touch.

**4. MORE STUDENTS MUST BE BLESSED.**

All worthy youth of the Church deserve a Ricks College experience, yet an increasingly smaller percentage of them will ever have that opportunity. As I indicated earlier in my remarks, it will be necessary for us at Ricks College to serve ever better the thousands of students we have on campus while simultaneously reaching out to bless the lives of tens of thousands of young Latter-day Saints throughout the world. We must learn how to assist and bless institute students and other LDS youth in Rhode Island and Rome while effectively serving our students on campus in Rexburg.

**5. RIGHTEOUS SOCIALITY (D&C 130:2) IS ESSENTIAL TO INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT.**

The word “sociality” as used in the scriptures refers to more than the sociability and socialness we experience in everyday living. Sociality implies an enduring bond of love and brotherhood and sisterhood. In fact, sociality as described in the scriptures specifically refers to the organization of eternal families. The sweet and tender associations we enjoy “here and now” are but a foreshadowing of the eternal relationships that will endure “there and then” beyond the grave.

The unique environment of Ricks College exists, in part, because of the righteous endeavors of both students and employees. Participation in all types of wholesome activities—spiritual, academic, social, and cultural—promotes the positive interactions that bring about a righteous sociality capable of enduring throughout eternity.

**6. SERVICE PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH.**

Only those individuals who lose themselves in meaningful service to others can ever discover who they really are. True service both blesses the one being served and provides unparalleled opportunities for personal growth and development to the one doing the serving. As students and staff fulfill callings in their respective wards and stakes, follow through with classroom, club, and other assignments, and carry out responsibilities in their homes, apartments, or
elsewhere, they grow in character and in their commitment to become more like the Savior.

7. A RICKS COLLEGE EXPERIENCE MUST BE AFFORDABLE FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES.

The efforts to provide unique teaching and learning experiences at Ricks College are of no avail if only an elite group, academically and economically, can ever come here. The cost of a Ricks experience must be kept within reasonable and affordable limits.

I believe that abiding by these principles will enable us to both preserve and enhance the spirit of Ricks College as we progress on our voyage of high adventure in a sea of rapid change.

Brothers and sisters, you and I have come here today primarily to be in the presence of and receive counsel from the prophet of the Lord. We have also assembled to celebrate Ricks College and its influence for good. An inauguration ceremony is not about the particular person who occupies the office of president. Rather, the ceremony is a celebration of the institution and its wonderful people. I am grateful to be here with you today and to share in this historic and memorable occasion.

As I now conclude, I would like to pay tribute to the people who make Ricks College what it is. Your faithfulness, dedication, and loyalty are a great source of inspiration to me. You have taught me much in the short time I have been with you. Elder Orson F. Whitney related the following relevant experience:

A captain of a ship in a storm was approached and asked if there was any danger. The tempests had been beating upon the vessel for days; she had been driven out of her course; the waves were rolling mountain high; the appearance of things was perilous, and the passengers were fearful. “Captain, is there danger?” asked one. The Captain smiled reassuringly, and replied, “Not one particle, so long as conditions remain as they now are. I have been down below; I have examined the machinery; every wheel is moving as it was ordained to move; every pin is in its place; every man is at his post; everything is working well, and as long as this continues, there is no danger whatever; but,” he added, “if a single wheel refused to move, if a single pin were out of place, if a man were to rebel and mutiny, there would be danger that we might all go to the bottom of the sea. (Orson F. Whitney, Conference Report, April 1907, p. 113)

I, too, have been “down below and examined the machinery” of this great college during the past eight months. I am not suggesting that we are perfect, nor do I believe that every responsibility and job on this campus will always be executed exactly as it is today. Indeed, we have much room for continuing improvement. But the illustration by Elder Whitney is an appropriate model for how Ricks College will move forward majestically through the uncertainties that lie before us. The machinery and pins that must remain as they now are at Ricks College include our faithfulness to the Savior and His teachings, our loyalty to the Brethren, and our willingness to do more than is required or expected in serving the young people of the Church. As we progress on our voyage, there is no danger for Ricks College whatsoever as long as we preserve and enhance these essential conditions. Again quoting Elder Whitney:

So long as we serve God, and are one with each other, the storms that come from without and spend their fury upon us, pass harmlessly over; they only have the effect of driving us together, making us feel for one another, love one another, and strengthen one another. (Orson F. Whitney, Conference Report, April 1907, p. 113)

May I now conclude by sharing with you my possession of greatest worth: my testimony that God lives, my knowledge that Jesus is the Christ and that the fullness of the gospel has been restored to the earth in these latter days. I testify and witness that there are living prophets and apostles on the earth today. These things I know. Of these things I testify, and do so in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ☺️
As President Bednar has said, I have come under assignment from the First Presidency to talk about the future of this institution. But I know enough about it to know that I need to talk first to the students because the Lord cares about you and would want me to recognize what has always been recognized at Ricks College, that the institution is largely determined by you. And more than that, it’s more than what I say or what even the teachers say; things happen here directed by the Lord in a rather specific way for your benefit.

A word about the lovely music. This choir has sung from the place where a choir sang the day I was inaugurated as the president of Ricks College. As they sang, somehow that came back to me again. I was touched then as I was now, not just by the beauty of your voices but by the faith. And I realized that I wasn’t the only one in that room who was touched that day.

Just a month or so ago, I was on assignment and I was in an airport in San Francisco, waiting between planes. I saw a man that I thought I recognized, and I realized that he probably was having trouble recognizing me, too. It had been a number of years. He was the dean of the graduate school at Stanford University when I left that faculty to come here to become the president many, many years ago. I remember being surprised that he came to my inauguration, knowing how busy he was. I recall that somehow in the moments of the inaugural party, moving about, I saw him. I encountered him that day, and he was crying. He expressed gratitude for having been here.

When I met him in the lounge in San Francisco recently, his first words were: “I’ve retired now. I’m living in Montana.” Then he wanted to tell me about a bishop of the Church that he had met. So of all the things that he would remember about me, he remembered the feelings of the gospel of Jesus Christ that he’d felt. He has not joined the Church yet, but he felt something here that you’ve felt. And I wanted you to know that as much as we thank the singers and those who prepared the music, what happened here today has been happening here for generations. That is, the Spirit of the Lord comes and touches people; and you’ve been in such a place and in such a moment today. You will years later, just like the dean of the Stanford Graduate School of Business, remember that there was a spirit here today.

Now the other thing I was impressed with is that you were asked to raise your scriptures. I felt as you did that to make a promise to you that I know will be fulfilled because it has been fulfilled for me in the last few days. We live in a time of increasing difficulty and change. Many of us have felt some things that led us to the scriptures. In the last few days, I have found things I had never seen there before because, in my extremity, the Lord showed me things that He had prepared long ago to help me. I’ll make you a promise: If you will, in the next few hours and days, go to the scriptures, you will, as you read them (pick them anywhere that you’re led to read), see scriptures speaking to you as if it was the voice of God, as if He knew your needs and your concerns; and He will tailor that to you, and it will be a witness to you that He knows you and that in that set of scriptures that you lifted above your head is a means by which He can guide you and comfort you. I promise you, you’ll have that experience—and it will be very personal—in the next few days.

Now, in the past few days our world changed. We were forced to look into the face of terrorism, not in a work of fiction or through television news clips of another nation. We saw it in our own land. That has brought anxiety and it will force changes in our lives. Some of the changes will be small. For instance, I drove to Rexburg this morning because I could attend more of a meeting of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles than if I spent two hours clearing security at the airport. Some changes will be larger. Those in the National Guard and the Reserves may be called away from their families and their normal lives.

I have a son and his wife who live with their six children in a country where there are personal risks. Those risks may now increase. His career depends on taking a series of international assignments. Should he change careers? What should he teach his children about risks and fear? We have two other sons, both former students at Ricks College, who work in an industry already hard-pressed by a faltering economy. They live in Boston. They flew the very flights that were involved in the tragedy this last week often, but by the blessing of heaven were at home on that day. Now there is a possibility that what happened in New York and Washington will further depress the economy and the capital markets. What changes should they consider? What should they teach their children about the future and uncertainty?

Each of us finds ourselves asking: “What other parts of my world that I thought were stable have now become uncertain?” No wonder that you and I have heard and read so often in the last few days “everything has changed.” But at least two things will help us take courage and find direction.
First, change is part of life. For instance, growing up and growing older are adventures in change filled with uncertainties and surprises. And second, God, through prophets, prepared us to expect changes to accelerate in the world. Do you remember the words from section 45 of the Doctrine and Covenants, verses 26–27:

And in that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men’s hearts shall fail them, and they shall say that Christ delayeth his coming until the end of the earth.

And the love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound.

Although we face an increase in challenges, there is another change sweeping the earth. It is a flood of opportunity. The steady flow of invention is an example. A generation ago there were no small computers. But now university campuses connect them with fiber-optic cable, and that cable may be replaced soon by wireless technologies. There are now tens of thousands of people taking BYU courses through web technology. There was no web a few years ago. The cell phones, which figured so touchingly in the tragedies of last week, did not exist a generation ago. The list of powerful and helpful new technological miracles goes on and on, and the rate of innovation is accelerating. We will live for better or for worse with rapid change and the uncertainty it brings. You and I want to make that change work for the better for us and not for the worse. We could learn much of how to do that from what has been done at this school in the last year. The people here have set an example for us worthy of our support and our emulation.

Now I move away from my text for a moment. I’ve written this out because I wanted to be sure that I had the opportunity to share it in advance with President Hinckley—which I did—but I have felt at this moment that I needed to move away from that to speak to you so that you’d be sure to understand what this means for you.

This is a world of change. Both the increase of difficulty (and that’s coming—the scriptures make that clear and the prophets have made that clear) and the increase of opportunities will bring tremendous change. What I intend to do is to describe to you the miraculous way in which this institution has done what you must do. I need to be very clear, and here it is.

Most of you, with caring parents, have at least once or twice as you left the house heard these words, “Remember who you are.” Some of you remember hearing it with pain. “Oh, Mother. There you go again.” Or “Oh, there’s Dad acting like a dad again.” Remember who you are.

What I’d like to suggest to you is that they were telling you the right thing, but it assumed you had asked and answered a question correctly to know who you really are. Now think of the difficulty. One of the reasons it didn’t work for some of you, by the way, is that you went out and did dumb things remembering who you were because you remembered “I know who I am. I’m a crazy, mixed-up teenager, still trying to figure out who I am; and I remember, yeah, I remember who I am.” And of course, then it doesn’t work very well, does it? If you remembered “Oh, yeah. I’m the captain of the football team,” or the basketball team, or something else, it might have helped a little bit. Or “I’m an example to my brothers and sisters.” I don’t know what it was, but I’ll just tell you this—answering that question well and wisely will determine whether or not [you progress] in a world where you must make changes (some because there are opportunities you will have taken advantage of, some just in the course of life, some because of difficulties—many reasons). You’re going to change tremendously and the world around you is going to change. The purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to change you so that you’re not trying to resist change. You’re trying to have change take you where the Lord wants you to go. How you answer the question of who you are will determine almost everything.

What I will now read to you, carefully prepared and seen by the prophet of God, is a description of the process that this institution has gone through and why the way they have done it has led the Lord to tell them who they are in such a way that even though they change, the part of them that God would have stay the same will stay the same. Now, I just have to quickly say that each of you, individually, has had messages sent to you throughout your life, just as this institution has had messages sent to it about what the Lord sees as special and distinct.

I had the experience, as a young boy growing up in New Jersey, of reading the scriptures in school, before the Constitution was interpreted to say that was illegal. So, in the Princeton Township School, they used to have, every day, a student pick a scripture to read. And every time I was ever asked, I always read the same scripture. The poor kids in the class had to listen to it over and over again when my turn came because, for some reason, I had been told, “This is for you; this is about you.” And so every thirty days, or however many students there were, my turn would come and I would read from chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians the same verse:

Charity suffereth long, and is kind;...charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.

(1 Corinthians 13:4)

That is a beautiful description of Paul. And I had been told as a little boy, “This is about you. And this is about the good life you will sometime have in a family.” Now, this was when I was a little, little boy. I was thinking about the New York Yankees, not about a family.

Years later a patriarch put his hands on my head. Gascoe Romney (the grandfather, by the way, of Mitt Romney, who’s the one running things in our Olympic efforts in Utah) put his hands on my head and gave me a blessing. He didn’t know me. He had no way to know about that scripture. He described to
me the home that I might someday have exactly as I had seen it every time I heard that scripture as a little boy. And so I am eyewitness that God is speaking to you. He really is. He knows who you are—each of you distinct, each of you with some possibilities of great contribution and a good life—and He is trying always to tell you who you are.

What I will now describe, as I return to this text, is the miraculous thing that has happened here—where the Lord has guided this institution and will guide it in such a way that although there will be tremendous change, the personal deep and spiritual characteristics of the place will not only not be lost, they will be enhanced. Here they were forced to learn about rapid change.

Fifteen months ago, without warning, they were told that the two-year Ricks College was to become the four-year BYU-Idaho. What they have done since then is miraculous, and it is a two-fold miracle.

First, there is the miracle in how much they have done. In those fifteen months they created a detailed plan, hired new faculty, received conditional accreditation status which could have taken years, and then launched this venture, BYU-Idaho. And change will not end. The phrase “rethinking education” is not to be only a slogan for the transformation from a two- to four-year status, the school is to be a place of educational innovation—permanently.

The second part of the miracle is the way they have made the changes. The people who serve here have found a way to make changes—great and rapid changes—that will enhance, not replace, the best of what the school has always been. Because of that, I can with confidence make you a promise. When you return in some distant future, you will find great innovation has become commonplace, and yet, amidst all the changes, the school will have retained and enriched the basic characteristics that blessed your life.

Let me tell you how that has happened in the last fifteen months and why I am so confident that it will continue. It is worth your hearing because it could be applied in our personal lives. Each of us wants to live in a world of change where our personal reaction to it is not only productive but where it enhances the best of what we are. We could begin where those who lead the school did. They took the words of living prophets as their guide.

President Hinckley chairs the Board of Trustees. On June 21 in the year 2000, he read a brief announcement to the media in Salt Lake City. The text is less than a single page. It has only twenty-one sentences in it, yet in the faithful way the people here followed that guide lays the basis of my optimism about the future.

One of the shortest sentences in the announcement is this one: “Adjustments to its mission will be minimal.” Now, think for a moment of the rush of pride that might come into a human heart on being told your two-year college was to become a “university,” and not an obscure university.

The announcement read:

The new four-year school will be known as Brigham Young University–Idaho, with the name change designed to give the school immediate national and international recognition.

That could tempt, in fact it would tempt, most people to make a minimal adjustment in the mission of the school to look more like the secular schools whose praise we might want. But the mission statement submitted to the accreditation agency in the plan entitled, “Substantive Change Prospectus for the Addition of Degree Programs at a Higher Level” was not changed at all. These could be the words of President Thomas E. Ricks or Principal Jacob Spori or any of the leaders from the beginning.

The first goal, stated boldly and plainly in the prospectus, is to “build testimonies of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and to encourage living its principles.” That choice to put the Savior and His purposes first is the primary basis of my confidence in the future.

Every innovation, every change, will be measured against this test of the heart. How would this proposed change build testimony and true conversion to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ in the heart of a student? True conversion comes by gaining sufficient faith to live the principles of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Some potential and proposed innovations will help that to happen. There will be other innovations proposed that would be less helpful or might even hinder. The cumulative effect of change here will be to build testimony and accelerate true conversion.

Another effect of that goal will be to bring here only teachers who have the Savior and His goal in their hearts. That choice to put the Savior at the center led to the other key choices made in the transition and will assure that those choices will endure. For instance, President Hinckley said in the announcement:

BYU-Idaho will continue to be teaching oriented. Effective teaching and advising will be the primary responsibilities of its faculty, who are committed to academic excellence.

The institution will emphasize undergraduate education and will award baccalaureate degrees; graduate degree programs will not be offered. Faculty rank will not be a part of the academic structure of the new four-year institution.

Only people who put the Savior first and take His life as their model could do that, since it is so foreign to so much of what goes on in universities. There are good people who think that it’s impossible to have academic excellence without, in time, adding graduate programs. And most faculties so treasure the marks of personal status that they would be puzzled by a university without faculty rank. But
there will be outstanding undergraduate education, even with those apparent paradoxes.

President Hinckley, in the press conference after his announcement, said, "It will be just as good a teaching institution as we can make it." That will happen because the Savior is and will be the great exemplar. He was a teacher. His work and glory was to lift others. He taught His disciples not to set themselves as being better than others, but to be the servants of all. Only a faculty who believe those things could see a blessing in serving without academic rank. Only a faculty with hearts set on the Savior could believe that they could keep growing as teachers in their changing and challenging fields without graduate programs. Only those with faith that the Savior will help them would respond with enthusiasm to President Bednar's vision of the future for this faculty:

In my mind the overarching theme for all of our scholarly work at Brigham Young University-Idaho should be inspired inquiry and innovation. Let me repeat that: inspired inquiry and innovation. We are not like other institutions of higher education; we have access to the gifts of the Spirit, which cannot be quantified nor counted. There are simply things we cannot adequately define and describe about the process of teaching with the Spirit. But, nonetheless, we should be excellent scholars, and our scholarship should be focused on the processes of learning and teaching. We will not be a recognized and highly regarded research institution in the traditional sense of that term. We will, however, emphasize a wide range of scholarly endeavors and excel in and play a pioneering role in understanding learning and teaching processes with faith and hard work, and in the process of time.

That pioneering role as a leader in understanding learning and teaching will come to pass. I, as a servant of Jesus Christ, testify to you that I know that will happen. Even with these apparently humble and even paradoxical standards of what we will be and who we will be, that miracle will occur and this institution, in the world, will become a place that people know of because the Lord had told me, and told me over and over again, he said in better words than I could have said them, and that's why I am quoting President Bednar so much here in this talk; it is not to flatter him. I want you to know that the Lord revealed to him some things that are true and are permanent and will guide this institution. Now that was the end of the quotation from him. I say this now for myself.

I need to say I read every document I could get my hands on to prepare this for President Hinckley's approval. And I read it worrying. I thought, you know with all the change that's going on there, they're going to lose their way. I want you to know (as a former president of Ricks College, as someone who came here as a young man and tried to find my way, and now as the commissioner of education and as a member of the Quorum of Twelve), I wept as I read the things that President Bednar said to this faculty during his period of time—knowing, first, that he was raised up for this task; but secondly, that the very things the Lord had told me, and told me over and over again, he said the thirteenth Article of Faith. Excuse me; my Primary was limited. We didn't have Primary in New Jersey in the mission field, and I didn't get that.

That was plagiarism from Paul. No, that was plagiarism from the thirteenth Article of Faith. Excuse me; my Primary was limited. We didn't have Primary in New Jersey in the mission field, and I didn't get that.

There are, however, some things we are to be pursuing. As I define the word Spartanism, it refers to rigorously self-disciplined and self-restrained. That is part of the spirit of Ricks at Brigham Young University-Idaho—simple, frugal, or austere; courageous in the face of pain, danger, or adversity.

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I am not sure where the Spartans got those characteristics, but I know why they are possessed by true disciples of Jesus Christ. Latter-day Saint pioneers came to this place for the Lord. They built this school in their poverty. The first principal, Jacob Spori, housed his family in an unheated grain storage shed in his first winter because that's all they had. The people here have treated all they had as the Lord's and always counted it as enough. And they have used it as if it was the offering
of the poorest widow to her Lord and to His kingdom. Nor have they felt badly treated when the Lord asked them to take less and yet give more. Because of that faithful obedience and sacrifice, I certify the Lord has poured out His Spirit here.

There will be a practical benefit, in turbulent times, from that frugality borne of faith. There will come times when the Lord’s prophet will ask us to do more with less. Knowing that will come, we must and will find ways to improve and to innovate that require little or no money. We will depend more upon inspiration and perspiration to make improvements than upon buildings and equipment. Then hard economic times will have little effect on the continuous innovation that will not cease at this school, even in the most difficult times.

The true disciples who have served here have believed that if they were frugal and faithful the Lord will provide enough to do His work. They have rarely deserved the chastening in chapter 6 of the Prophet Joseph Smith’s translation of Matthew:

Why is it that ye murmur among yourselves, saying, We cannot obey thy word because ye have not all these things, and seek to excuse yourselves, saying that, After all these things do the Gentiles seek.

Behold, I say unto you that your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. (Joseph Smith, The Holy Scriptures, Inspired Version, Matthew 6:36-38)

President Hinckley expressed confidence that frugality was here and would endure when he said in his announcement:

With some additions and modifications, the physical facilities now in place in Rexburg are adequate to handle the new program. Undoubtedly, some changes to the campus will be necessary. However, they will be modest in nature and scope.

He also said:

Of necessity, the new four-year institution will be assessing and restructuring its academic offerings. Predictably, the school will need to change and eliminate some long-standing and beneficial programs as the school focuses upon key academic disciplines and activities.

Now, President Hinckley has long experience in education—long experience—so he knew how remarkable it was to pay such a tribute to this place. He said there would be focus, not a growth and spread, in the academic offerings. He expected that people would willingly sacrifice what they do best and love most for what the Lord wants even more for our students. He expected that people here would find ways to make the physical space already in place sufficient to do more for more students.

Listen to this from his announcement and consider the tribute he was paying with his confidence:

BYU-Idaho will operate on an expanded year-round basis, incorporating innovative calendaring and scheduling while also taking advantage of advancements in technology which will enable the four-year institution to serve more students.

The expectation is clearly that inspired and frugal people will find ways to bless more students at ever lower cost per student. That has been true at some times in the past. It will be true in the future, whatever the turbulent times ahead will bring. For those characteristics to endure, the students—you and those who follow you—must play a major part. It is their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His restored gospel and their obedience to His commandments that will put Him at the center of the school. Their faith will largely determine whether we learn here by study and also by faith. As we do, we will attain academic excellence. We will not attain academic excellence without that faith of yours as students and those that follow to learn by study and by faith. It is your frugality and their frugality, their willingness to make due with a little less, that will set a tone for the campus. Their sacrifice, your sacrifice, will bring down the blessings of heaven as it always has. The students will learn from example how to keep on a steady upward course in times of great change. They will see leaders and teachers and staff members for whom the Savior and His kingdom are at the center of their lives. From that example, I make a prophecy. Now listen carefully.

From that example they—you—will become life-long teachers in their families, in the Church, and in their work, and they will bless others wherever they go by what they have learned about innovating with scarce resources and treating all they have as if it were the Lord’s.

You can imagine the joy of an employer or a Church leader when such a graduate arrives. The graduates will be at personal peace by having kept the commandments. They will be natural leaders who know how to teach and how to learn. They will have the power to innovate and improve without requiring more of what money can buy. Those graduates of BYU-Idaho will become—and this is a prophecy that I am prepared to make and make solemnly—those graduates of BYU-Idaho will become legendary for their capacity to build the people around them and to add value wherever they serve.

Each of us can follow the example we have seen here. We can follow a steady upward course in a world of change without fear, welcoming the opportunities. The way is a simple one, clearly marked. It is to keep our eyes and hearts fixed on that which is unchangeable. We must have an eye of faith fixed on eternal life. That life, the greatest of all the gifts of God, is to live in glory forever in families in the presence of our loving
Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you? Do you look forward with an eye of faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal life?

For our eyes to be focused on eternal life, we must have unwavering confidence and our hearts fixed on the Savior. He said, in 3 Nephi, chapter 9, verses 14-15:

Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me.

Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father, and the Father in me; and in me hath the Father glorified his name.

Our hearts, fixed on Him and His work, will keep us on course, however the wind blows. We will follow His prophet. We will see the greatest work of our lives as nurturing others as the Savior did. We will see the potential in others as He sees it. We will treat every resource that comes into our hands as a trust from Him. We will see our victories as a gift from Him and so be proof against pride. We will not fear because we will know we are on His errand.

Now, you young people, I need to commend you and warn you, if I may. A number of you dressed carefully to come to this meeting, not for me but for the Lord. A number of you were quiet at the beginning, not for me or for President Bednar but for the Lord. A number of you in this room, I know, have been praying. I have felt that. One of the joys of coming to Ricks College has always been for me to know that I would go into a room where people of faith would be praying that the Holy Ghost would be poured out. Every time I come, I always have a confirmation that that's happened again. One of the reasons that we can prophesy about the academic excellence that will be here is you will do that same thing in classes. And those that follow you will do it in classes. You will do it in the evenings. You'll pray for the blessings of heaven to come down upon your teachers. You'll pray that you'll be taught by the Holy Spirit. The prayer that I've felt in this room is one of the things that has made this institution worthy of the trust that has been given it by the prophet of God. I want you to know that, that I know that about you.

Now, in addition, I would suggest this: The very fact that you dress nicely, I understand, at least is partly true because somebody may have said something to you. One of your friends may have suggested, "Why don't we go dressed a little better for that meeting today." Those of you in this room who did that (and I don't know how many there are; there may be just a few who said, "Why don't we do a little more so that the Spirit of God…")—you may not have used these words, but what you were saying was, "Let's go to that meeting in such a way that we might bring down the powers of heaven"), those of you in the room that had the courage to do that, to try to influence the persons around you, I'll make you a prophecy. I will simply tell you: The day will come that that capacity to influence people around you for good will have you singled out as one of the great leaders in whatever place you're in. They will not quite know why, but you will know that the reason you are being singled out is not because of your innate gifts as a leader but because you have done what the Savior would do—learned how to, and did, reach out to those around you to try to lift them, to help them to be better even when it might be a little bit difficult and you might not have been received very well. Another thing that I will say to you. I've mentioned so much about frugality. You might say, "Brother Eyring, that's an awful thing to say. We go first-class in the Church. Why would you talk about that? I mean, heavens, we want to make it as fancy as we can." I would only say this to you:

You want to have a beautiful campus. You want to have a beautiful place that you live in someday in your family. You want to have things as nice as you can have them. But I'll tell you something. One of the things that you do is to always look at every nice thing you have as God's and treat it very, very carefully. This campus will be beautiful because you don't think it's yours—you think it's His, and you'll care for it that way. In addition, you will not ever, ever ask for more than you need. You will always say, "Is there a way, with more effort, more faith, more innovation, that I could do the things the Lord wants without asking for more of the resources that are in scarce supply even in a Church that appears to have great resources, as we do?" But the needs are great, and the opportunities are tremendous for what can be done.

I want you to know that the reason those people from the Board of Education used to say, "Hal, isn't there something more we could do for you up there at Ricks College?" is that they were almost afraid we wouldn't ask; that we might run just a little too lean, just a little too hard, trying to do the best we could with what we had; just afraid we might overdo it because that's who we were.

I testify to you this beautiful campus that you see now is the reward from a loving God and His Board of Education that said: "We know those people. We know what they're like. They're out of a pioneer heritage, and they don't think that the things they have mean much. It's what they are. And they think they can do a very great deal without very much."

Now I testify to you that that blessing is both a practical one and a spiritual one. It's practical because then the Lord will provide when we do need something, and He'll provide generously because He trusts us. But it has another benefit as
well. I testify to you that that spirit of sacrifice, that spirit of trying to give just a little bit more and ask a little less brings down the powers of heaven. And all of this great future that we’re speaking of at this institution will depend upon miracles regularly occurring, where students learn more than you thought you could learn. Some of you have already been praying for that miracle. It will come. Do your homework, by the way; don’t just pray. I’ve tried. Straight revelation in a mathematics examination—it does not work very well. It’s better to have studied the work ahead of time. We’ll do both, but that kind of a blessing will come. You will be learners. Your teachers will teach better than their natural capacities would ever allow them to do because the powers of heaven will come down. They will come down because of your faith.

Remember my little talk to you about frugality is an example of your faith. It’s not the only way. But it’s one way in which you’ll say, “Look, we know that with the help of heaven we can do more than anybody could imagine with the resources that we have. We know that with the help of heaven even those of us who thought we couldn’t learn mathematics can learn mathematics or learn a language. We know that that’s possible.”

The miracle that President Bednar spoke of and that I promised you—that this will become a place renowned for its understanding of teaching and learning—will have to face the very problem he, under inspiration, pointed out in his talk to the faculty. We can’t “quantify the gifts of the Spirit.” We don’t know how that works. We probably never will write academic papers about how that works. But we will be able to do things here that will amaze the world in terms of the rate and the quality of learning, and we will learn ways about how that is done that will apply in other places in the world, but never quite as well as they apply here. That’s a little like the people who say, “Could I borrow your family home evening manual? I want to have a family like yours.” And the answer is, “It ain’t in the manual.” The manual is a reflection of what it is that happens in those family home evenings.

It will be that way here as well. We will have a spiritual outpouring, because of your faith and the faith of the faculty and those who lead here, that will lead us to be legendary in terms of our capacity to teach and to learn and in our capacity to innovate without needing the resources that others have to have in order to be the remarkable contributors you’re going to be. And that’s going to follow you everywhere you go.

I hope I live long enough to someday meet some employer who employed one of you and says, “Where did that come from? I’ve never had such a person. Why people just flock around that person. And they want to follow. They don’t have to be led; they’re seeking to go where that person wants to go. And they come up with new ideas. I don’t know where that comes from. They seem to find a better way, and the budget doesn’t go up. I can’t understand it.” And I’ll smile and say, “Well, come with me to Rexburg.” And I may not be able to show it to you, and I may not be able to prove it to you, but you’ll feel it. There will be a spirit here, I so testify, because of the love of God for all of His faithful children. And those blessings will be poured out here in rich abundance.

Now, I leave you my blessing. I leave it to the faculty, and I leave it to the students who are here as well. I bless you that every day you are here—including the faculty who may be here for a long time and some of you I don’t know how long, but awhile—I bless you that every day, if you will ask in prayer to be shown where the hand of God intervened in your life that day, I bless you that you will see that. It will be made manifest to you. That you will see that He is leading and guiding and lifting you, and that He knows you. I bless you. I bless you with confidence that if you will review the day at the end of the day and then pray and ask, you will have revealed to you evidence that the hand of God was lifting you and this institution. I so bless you.

I further bless you that you may have the capacity to influence others. I bless you that you will be a lifter, a teacher, and a leader. I so bless you in your families, in the Church, and in wherever place you may go to serve.

Now I leave you my testimony. The most precious gift I have. And that is this. I bless you to know that what I speak now is the truth. There is a loving Heavenly Father. He has been watching us today as He always watches us. He knows you. He has known you and has nurtured you. He has a plan for you as He has a plan for this institution of what it might become if it can just have revealed, both to the institution and to you, who you really are. Oh, He loves you! He knows you. He smiles down upon you. I so testify. He wants you to come home again to Him, I so testify. And He’s provided a Savior, Jesus Christ. He lives. I know He lives. The Savior is resurrected. He is in one place at a time because He is a resurrected being, but He is aware of us and all of our Heavenly Father’s children. And for all of them, He atoned for their sins and broke the bands of death, I so testify.

Gordon B. Hinckley is a living prophet of God. I testify to you that in the years ahead, whatever difficulties may come, whatever opportunities are there, God will provide a living prophet. If you will listen, listen and believe like a child the way those who lead this institution did at this time of transition, if you will do that, whatever the transitions are in your life, you will not only retain the goodness that God has been so helpful in building into you, it will be enhanced. I testify to you that’s true. I pray that I may see you again sometime. I pray that I may come back to this place again sometime and know that when I see you and when I come here I will have seen the blessings of God come down on faithful people who’ve allowed Him to shape them to the great opportunities that He has before you and before this place, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.
Brothers and sisters, I am grateful to meet and worship with you this afternoon. I pray for and invite the companionship of the Holy Ghost as together we consider some of the remarkable events that are taking place on the campus of Brigham Young University-Idaho.

After returning home from their missions, each of our sons has been blessed to teach in the missionary training center in Provo. Because of their experiences at the MTC and because of my service as a Seventy, whenever we are all together we invariably end up talking about what is happening at the MTC, about missions and missionaries and missionary work, and about what and how the new elders and sisters are being trained and taught.

As we recently were together talking about the MTC, I began to think about the 17 missionary training centers that are located throughout the world. It occurred to me that all of the missionary training centers have the following characteristics in common:

- The missionary training centers are rather isolated geographically and are few in number.
- Missionaries reside and study in the MTC for relatively short periods of time.
- The nature of the instruction in the MTCs is focused and intense.
- There are in the MTCs distinctive requirements for demeanor and dress.
- Most missionary training centers are located near a temple.

Now please pay particular attention to this next characteristic:

- BYU-Idaho is located in a rather isolated geographic area.
- By and large, students are enrolled at BYU-Idaho for a relatively short period of time.
- The learning and teaching processes at BYU-Idaho are focused and intense.
- There is at BYU-Idaho a distinguishing standard of deportment and dress.
- And as was announced by the First Presidency last December, BYU-Idaho will soon be adjacent to a temple.

Brothers and sisters, it should be obvious to all of us that something spiritually significant is taking place in Rexburg, Idaho. The announcement in June of 2000 that Ricks College would become Brigham Young University-Idaho was much more than the establishing of a new baccalaureate degree granting institution. The addition of new faculty and other employees is not simply about covering classes and meeting staffing needs. The construction on and remodeling of this campus are about so much more than new laboratories and classrooms and study areas.

Let me suggest that in Rexburg, Idaho, we are in the process of creating not a missionary training center (MTC), but a disciple preparation center—a DPC. In this special and sacred and set apart place, you and I have access to unparalleled spiritual resources that can assist us in developing and deepening our devotion as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the primary and most important reason for the existence of Brigham Young University-Idaho and for its sponsorship by and affiliation with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

A disciple preparation center. Let us now pay particular attention to the three words that make up the phrase I just introduced: disciple, preparation, and center.

A disciple is one who follows or attends upon another for the express purpose of learning (Oxford English Dictionary On-Line, second edition, 1989). Please note that a disciple both follows and learns, as the following scriptures highlight:
...I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

(John 8:12)

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

(Matthew 11:28-30)

Thus, a disciple of Christ is a follower of Jesus who learns of and from Him and lives according to His teachings. As we learn in Doctrine and Covenants 41:5:

He that receiveth my law and doeth it, the same is my disciple; and he that saith he receiveth it and doeth it not, the same is not my disciple, and shall be cast out from among you.

A disciple of Christ is one who is following and learning to be like Christ—learning to think, to feel, and to act as He does. He or she is striving to gain “…the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16). Becoming a true disciple of the Savior and following His ways are the most demanding learning objectives we can ever strive to achieve. No other discipline compares with His curriculum in either requirements or rewards. Discipleship demands the total transformation of a person by putting off the natural man and becoming a saint through the Atonement of Christ the Lord (see Mosiah 3:19). A disciple is one who loves the Lord and serves Him with all of his or her heart, might, mind, and strength.

The word preparation implies the process of making or getting ready; the previous putting or setting in order for any action or purpose (Oxford English Dictionary On-Line, second edition, 1989). And one of the common uses of the word center connotes a point from which things and influences originate or emanate (Oxford English Dictionary On-Line, second edition, 1989). Taken together, these three words, disciple preparation center, suggest to me a place in which followers of the Master learn and are set in order and are made ready—and from which their influence flows into the world.

What is it that makes this campus such a powerful disciple preparation center (DPC)? Let me suggest three factors that contribute to the spiritual strength that is available here. (1) This institution of higher education is a temple of learning; (2) this institution will be located next to a holy temple, even a House of the Lord; and (3) this institution is surrounded by strong stakes of Zion.

FACTOR 1: BYU-IDAHO IS A TEMPLE OF LEARNING.

Our daughter-in-law, Charlotte, graduated from the nursing program at BYU-Provo in April of 2003. Our family was delighted to attend her graduation ceremony and to celebrate her accomplishment.

Over the years of our service together, I have developed a great affection for and relationship with Elder Merrill Bateman; and I knew this graduation ceremony was to be his final commencement as the president of that institution. So I listened with particular attention to his message to the graduates. I was most intrigued by his use of a verse from Isaiah and his explication of that verse:

...I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

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And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

(Isaiah 2:2-3)

Elder Bateman then proceeded to describe how the instructional facilities on the campuses of the universities affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have been dedicated to the God of Jacob and are a portion of what is referred to in Isaiah—a part of the Lord’s house that has been established in the tops of the mountains wherein He will teach us of His ways. Now, we all know that these verses refer to the House of the Lord, to the holy temples. But what came into my mind as I listened to Elder Bateman was this thought: we are blessed to have the House of the Lord, and we also are blessed to have temples of learning.

BYU-Idaho, brothers and sisters, is a temple of learning. I have tried to use that phrase carefully so as to not confuse the House of the Lord with a temple of learning. But there are important patterns and parallels between the House of the Lord and temples of learning, with temples of learning referring specifically to the institutions of higher education sponsored by and affiliated with the Church.

In both the House of the Lord and in the temples of learning, a standard of worthiness must be met in order to enter and to learn what is being taught. For a member who desires a temple recommend and for a student who wishes to enter into one of the temples of learning, there is a standard of worthiness.

Interestingly, in both the holy temple and in temples of learning, a significant personal commitment is linked to the learning process. Consider, brothers and sisters, that in the House of the Lord we come under covenant and bind
ourselves to act in all holiness. In a similar way, students who are admitted to study and learn in the temples of learning make a commitment to keep the commandments of God and to abide by the university honor and dress codes. Thus, covenants and commitments expand our education in the House of the Lord and in the Church's temples of learning.

In both the House of the Lord and in a temple of learning, as a result of what we experience and what we learn and what we feel, we then strive to heed a higher standard. That is the outcome and the result of what we learn. Consequently, we prepare a little harder, dress a little nicer, act a little better, and think more deeply about things that really matter.

Please turn with me to Doctrine and Covenants 97:1-3. Parley P. Pratt had the responsibility in Kirtland at this time to direct the School of the Elders and to assist the elders in preparing for the work of proclaiming the gospel. I draw your attention to verses 1, 2, and 3—with particular emphasis on verse 3. Think in terms of this institution as a temple of learning as we read these verses together.

Verily I say unto you my friends, I speak unto you with my voice, even the voice of my Spirit, that I may show unto you my will concerning your brethren in the land of Zion, many of whom are truly humble and are seeking diligently to learn wisdom and to find truth.

Verily, verily I say unto you, blessed are such, for they shall obtain; for I, the Lord, show mercy unto all the meek, and upon all whomsoever I will, that I may be justified when I shall bring them unto judgment.

Behold, I say unto you, concerning the school in Zion, I, the Lord, am well pleased that there should be a school in Zion….(emphasis added)

In this school in Zion in Rexburg—in this temple of learning—disciples can follow the Savior and learn of and from Him the lessons that will prepare them for effective service in their homes, in the Church, and in their communities and careers.

**FACTOR 2: BYU-IDAHO WILL BE LOCATED NEXT TO A HOUSE OF THE LORD.**

Let us now focus on the second key factor that contributes to the spiritual strength that is available in this disciple preparation center. Section 97 of the Doctrine and Covenants, from which we have just read, highlights the importance of both a school in Zion and of the holy temple. Please now turn with me to verse 10:

Verily I say unto you, that it is my will that a house should be built unto me in the land of Zion, like unto the pattern which I have given you.

verses 13-14:

For a place of thanksgiving for all saints, and for a place of instruction for all those who are called to the work of the ministry in all their several callings and offices;

That they may be perfected in the understanding of their ministry, in theory, in principle, and in doctrine, in all things pertaining to the kingdom of God on the earth, the keys of which kingdom have been conferred upon you.

And verse 16:

Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God. (Doctrine and Covenants 97:10, 13-14, 16)

At the time of his call to become the fourteenth president of the Church, President Howard W. Hunter issued an invitation for all members of the Church to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants.


Brothers and sisters, temples are holy; temples are sacred places for learning about and entering into eternal covenants; temples are places of peace and of revelation. Temples are eternal links between heaven and earth; between past, present, and future; between the living and the dead; between time and eternity; between husbands and wives, parents and children; and between men and women with Christ. It is in the House of the Lord that things of the earth are joined with the things of heaven.

Now please consider the spiritual significance of having a House of the Lord on the campus of Brigham Young University-Idaho. Ponder the impact of a holy temple on the campus of this school in Zion. President Gordon B. Hinckley has taught:

Every temple that this Church has built has in effect stood as a monument to our belief in the immortality of the human soul, that this phase of mortal life through which we pass is part of a continuous upward climb… and that as certain as there is life here, there will be life there. That is our firm belief. It comes about through the Atonement of the Savior, and the temple becomes…the bridge from this life to the next. The temple is concerned with things of immortality. We wouldn't have to build a temple for marriages if we didn't believe in the eternity of the family. We build it so the family may be eternal. All of the ordinances which take place in the house...
of the Lord become expressions of our belief in that fundamental and basic doctrine. The temple therefore becomes the ultimate in our system of worship and therefore is of great and significant importance to us. (Gordon B. Hinckley, “Inspirational Thoughts,” Ensign, April 2002, p. 3)

The temple as a quiet but consistent reminder in our midst of the centrality of Jesus Christ and of the immortality of the soul cannot but elevate the quality of our education and the depth and beauty of our associations.

Several years ago, Elder L. Tom Perry visited our campus and was asked the following question by a faculty member: “Elder Perry, what do you see as the looming storm clouds on the horizon about which we should know so we can better teach and prepare the young people of the Church?” With no hesitation his answer was, “Worldliness.” The next question: “What can we do, Elder Perry, to best help the young people combat worldliness?” His answer: “Help them prepare to worship properly in the temple.”

As you are well aware, we have devotional speakers every Tuesday—many of whom are emeritus General Authorities or Brethren who have been released after serving in the Second Quorum of the Seventy. A significant number of those Brethren, after being released as General Authorities, have served as temple presidents. As Sister Bednar and I host these Brethren, I ask each one of them this question: “What did you learn serving in the temple that you wish you had better known or understood or appreciated when you were a General Authority?” I have asked that question to many of the Brethren, and the consistency of their answers is striking! The following response by Elder J. Ballard Washburn is representative of so many of the answers I have received:

I have come to better and more fully understand the protection available in the temple and through our covenants. I have come to better and more fully understand what it means to make an acceptable offering of temple worship. There is a difference between church-attending, tithe-paying members who occasionally rush into the temple to go through a session and those members who faithfully and consistently worship in the temple.

Brothers and sisters, please remember that penetrating statement by Elder Washburn: “...the protection available in the temple and through our covenants.” I pray that we will begin to understand the significance of what was announced last December. The Rexburg temple will contribute to a potent and powerfully protected place of preparation for disciples of Christ who will be an influence for good all over the earth.

**FACTOR 3: BYU-IDAHO IS SURROUNDED BY STRONG STAKES OF ZION.**

Stakes are established as places of refuge and protection. Please turn with me to Doctrine and Covenants 115:5-6:

> Verily I say unto you all: Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations;
> 
> And that the gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes, may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth.

Please consider that during your tenure as a student at Brigham Young University-Idaho, you also are a member of a stake of Zion. We have on this campus at the present time more than 70 wards organized into seven stakes, and the protection promised in the verses we just read applies specifically to you. Additionally, in the surrounding city of Rexburg and in the neighboring communities of Southeastern Idaho are additional strong stakes of Zion. Truly we are blessed to reside in an area of such spiritual stability and strength.

Your experiences and service in the stakes of Zion on this campus contribute in important ways to your preparation as a disciple of the Savior. Each of you will learn lessons here that will bless you and those you influence throughout your entire life.

**UNPARALLELED SPIRITUAL RESOURCES**

Brothers and sisters, consider the spiritual strength and power that are available in a single location where we find (1) a temple of learning, i.e., this institution; (2) a House of the Lord; and (3) strong stakes of Zion on campus and in Rexburg and in the surrounding communities. I only know of four places which the Lord has so prepared: Provo, Utah; Laie, Hawaii; Salt Lake City, Utah; and Rexburg, Idaho. And with the opportunity and privilege to study and learn here come a tremendous responsibility.

I am fully aware that not all young people in the Church can or want to attend a Church-sponsored institution of higher education. And I certainly am not suggesting that these institutions are the only places where latter-day disciples are prepared and tutored and trained. Ultimately, the best disciple preparation center is located within the walls of our own homes. Nevertheless, these institutions do have an important role to play today in the building of the kingdom of God on the earth.

In the midst of an increasing downpour of devilish devastation across the earth, you are blessed to be here at one of the Lord’s disciple preparation centers. BYU-Idaho is not just a university. You are not merely university students. Studying here involves much more than taking tests and performing well in academic classes—although your academic development and performance truly are important. But there
are essential lessons to be learned and preparations to be made at this DPC by the Lord's latter-day disciples. Let me suggest three primary lessons I hope every student will take away from his or her experience at this disciple preparation center that we call Brigham Young University-Idaho.

**DPC LESSON 1**

A disciple's faith is focused upon the Son of God. Brothers and sisters, the first principle of the gospel is not simply faith; rather, the first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Saving faith centers in the Savior and through Him in the Father (Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, p. 164). The faith of a true disciple is focused upon and rooted in the Savior and Redeemer, even the Lord Jesus Christ. As we read in Hebrews 12:2:

> Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

**DPC LESSON 2**

A disciple recognizes that faith in the Savior is a spiritual gift and appropriately seeks for that gift in his or her life. Faith is not a trait to be developed or a reward to be earned. Rather, it is a gift we receive from God. Scriptural synonyms for faith include trust, confidence, and reliance. Thus, the spiritual gift of faith enables us to trust in Christ and to have confidence in His power to cleanse, to renew, to redeem, and to strengthen us. Faith means we are beginning to rely upon His merits, mercy, and grace *(2 Nephi 2:8; 31:19; Moroni 6:4)*. Indeed, you and I have a responsibility to properly seek after this gift; and we must do all that we can do to qualify for the gift of faith. Ultimately, however, the gift is bestowed upon us by a loving and caring God. Elder James E. Talmage indicated in his classic book *The Articles of Faith* that faith is a gift from God.

Though within the reach of all who diligently strive to gain it, faith is nevertheless a divine gift [and can be obtained only from God *(Matthew 16:17; John 6:44, 65; Ephesians 2:8; 1 Corinthians 12:9; Romans 12:3; Moroni 10:11)*]. As is fitting for so priceless a pearl, it is given to those only who show by their sincerity that they are worthy of it, and who give promise of abiding by its dictates.

> …No compulsion is used in bringing men to a knowledge of God; yet, as fast as we open our hearts to the influences of righteousness, the faith that leads to life eternal will be given us of our Father. *(The Articles of Faith*, p. 107)

President Joseph F. Smith also has taught:

> Faith is always a gift of God to man, which is obtained by obedience, as all other blessings are. *(Gospel Doctrine, p. 212)*

> …Faith does not come without works; faith does not come without obedience to the commandments of God. *(Conference Report, October 1903, p. 4)*

Young people of your age can and will and do receive this supernal gift. You need not be called to a visible or responsible position in the Church, and you do not have to be “old” to qualify for this gift. An 18-year-old disciple at BYU-Idaho can and should be blessed with great faith in the Savior.

**DPC LESSON 3**

A disciple's faith in the Savior and spiritual preparation dispel fear. Brothers and sisters, we live in troubled and turbulent times. The days described in Doctrine and Covenants 45:26 are indeed the days in which we now find ourselves.

> And in that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men’s hearts shall fail them,…

And President Boyd K. Packer recently put present world conditions into perspective for all of us:

> The world is spiraling downward at an ever-quickening pace. I am sorry to tell you that it will not get better. …I know of nothing in the history of the Church or in the history of the world to compare with our present circumstances. Nothing happened in Sodom and Gomorrah which exceeds in wickedness and depravity that which surrounds us now.

> Words of profanity, vulgarity, and blasphemy are heard everywhere. Unspeakable wickedness and perversion were once hidden in dark places; now they are in the open, even accorded legal protection.

> At Sodom and Gomorrah these things were localized. Now they are spread across the world, and they are among us. (“The One Pure Defense,” Address to CES Religious Educators, 6 February 2004, p. 4)

Such descriptions may cause the hearts of some men and women to fail them. But as the Lord states, “…my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved…” *(Doctrine and Covenants 45:32)*. Protected by “…the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” *(Doctrine and Covenants 27:17)* and prepared with the “…gospel of peace…” *(Doctrine and Covenants 27:16)*, the Lord's disciples will not fear. Precisely because such disciples are prepared, they shall not fear *(Doctrine and Covenants 38:30)*.
Brothers and sisters, we are blessed to be in a special place—a disciple preparation center—and to be engaged at a pivotal time in an essential work. As disciples we have important lessons to learn; we have an eternally important work to do. And in these tumultuous times, we will follow the Master.

I conclude with a teaching by the Prophet Joseph Smith that I consider to be the latter-day disciple’s mission statement:

…the Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done. (“Statement of the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Wentworth Letter,” written March 1, 1842, History of the Church, Vol. 4, p. 540)

I testify and witness that God the Eternal Father lives and that Jesus is the Christ. He lives. I know He lives. May each of us use to the fullest the opportunities we have at this disciple preparation center to learn of Him, to learn from Him, and to follow Him. The supernal promise contained in section 19 of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 23, is ever before us:

Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.
Inaugural Response

President Kim B. Clark
President of Brigham Young University-Idaho
Brigham Young University-Idaho
October 11, 2005

President Hinckley, to you, and President Monson, President Faust, and all the members of the Board of Trustees, to Elder Kerr, to the past presidents of this school who are here today, to President Summers, to our many honored guests, the wonderful students of BYU-Idaho, my colleagues and friends and family, my brothers and sisters, I extend my welcome, my gratitude, and my love on this special day.

It is an honor and privilege to stand before you to respond to the charge given to me by President Hinckley. I would like to share with you for a few moments what is in my heart and what I believe it means to be the president of Brigham Young University-Idaho at this time in its history.

As I look back on what has brought us here this day, I am conscious of a legacy and heritage that comes in two parts. The first is my family. I am grateful beyond words for Sue, my eternal companion, the love of my life, who has blessed my life for 35 years. I am grateful for seven wonderful children and for their families. They teach, inspire, and support me; and I love them.

The legacy of family is a great source of inspiration to me. Sue's father, Charles Hunt, passed away four years ago. But her mother is here today, and I salute her for her faith and kindness and the example she is to us. I hope that my mom and dad who both have passed away will know of this day and of my gratitude and love for them. They sacrificed and invested so much and passed on to me many things, but one of special importance today is a love of learning and teaching. I come from a long line of teachers on both sides of my family, and I cherish that heritage.

The second part of the legacy is the history of this school. Beginning as a frontier academy in 1888 and continuing under inspired leaders for over 100 years, Ricks College established a legacy of faith, and sacrifice, and righteousness. This is a very special place, a place that the Lord has preserved and dedicated to be the home of a great university with a special and distinctive culture. There is on this campus a spirit of love and support for each individual student. There is a consecration of time and talent by the people who work here that blesses the lives of those students. In the midst of that love and that consecration, the Holy Ghost ministers on this campus. The Spirit of Ricks is real.

Now, under the direction of the Prophet and the Board we have become Brigham Young University–Idaho. In the initial stage of that transition and under the overall guidance of the Board, Elder Eyring as Commissioner of Church Education and Elder Bednar as the president of BYU-Idaho laid down important guiding principles and powerful ideas about education in this university. As I pondered these ideas and principles in light of the challenge we now face, a scripture whose power I felt as an 18-year-old freshman at Harvard College came to mind. It is found in Luke chapter 6 verses 47-48. This is the Savior speaking:

Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:
He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

We, too, must dig deep. We have been given powerful principles and an inspired framework; but we must dig deep and sink those principles into the bedrock of testimony, and faith, and consecration.

As I look forward to the future, my starting point is the mission of this university. We have a wonderful, inspired mission to build testimonies of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ; to educate our students with high quality; to prepare them for the responsibilities they will face; and to create here a wholesome, righteous community in which students may thrive spiritually, intellectually, and socially.

I like to summarize our mission with two words. The first is disciple. Our mission, our very purpose, is to educate, develop, and prepare disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. This purpose is deeply rooted in this university. In a way that I have found remarkable, this is a student-centered university. It is that way by divine appointment. The Lord watches over this university in a direct and powerful way. He is mindful of the individual students who come here. Our purpose is to help them become His true followers, His true disciples, a light to the world.

The second word is leader. When I use that word I have in mind leadership with a small ‘l.’ This is the kind of leadership
That is our mission. As we pursue that mission in the years ahead, I believe there are three great imperatives before us, three great things the Lord would have us do. The first is that we must raise substantially the quality of every aspect of the experience our students have.

As good as it is today (and believe me, it is very, very good), every dimension of the BYU-Idaho experience—spiritual, intellectual, social—must increase in its quality. We must do all of this to better prepare our students for a very challenging world. This will require inspired innovation and important changes in many aspects of our work. Let me give you one example of what I see ahead.

The example is learning by faith. The Lord has commanded us to “…seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:118). President Harold B. Lee said this about learning by faith:

Let no one think that “learning by faith” contemplates an easy or lazy way to gain knowledge and ripen it into wisdom…. Learning by faith requires the bending of the whole soul through worthy living to become attuned to the Holy Spirit of the Lord, the calling up from the depths of one’s own mental searching, and the linking of our own efforts to receive the true witness of the Spirit. (Harold B. Lee, “The Iron Rod,” Ensign, June 1971, p. 5)

Faith is at the heart of almost every line in that statement. It is in the “bending” of the soul in righteous obedience; it is in the diligent searching, in the “calling up,” and in the “linking” of personal effort to the Spirit. In all this there is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, faith in the power of His Atonement, faith in the ministry of the Holy Spirit, as the Savior said, to “…teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance…” (John 14:26). That faith moves the student to action: to obey, to bend, to search, to call up, to link. That is learning by faith.

Now, there is a great spirit of learning on this campus and much learning by faith. Our challenge is to take that spirit deeper, to make learning by faith a pervasive, everyday reality. This will require much of our students. But it also will require much of the faculty and staff. Indeed, it will require new ways of learning and teaching based on inspired scholarship.

This university has a wonderful faculty. They are teachers of skill, passion, and commitment. We have a loyal and dedicated staff, people of talent and goodness. They do great work today. The challenge before us is to create even more powerful and effective learning experiences in which students learn by faith. This requires, but is more than, teaching by the Spirit. To learn by faith, students need opportunities to take action. Some of those opportunities will come in a stronger, even more effective Activities program where students lead and teach one another and participate broadly. Some of them will come in the classroom, where prepared students, exercising faith, step out beyond the light they already possess, to speak, to contribute, and to teach one another. It is precisely in that moment of faith that President Lee’s “calling up” and “linking” of personal effort to the Spirit occurs. It is in that moment that the Spirit teaches.

To create that kind of classroom, with that kind of learning, will require more than new methods and approaches to teaching. It will require new learning experiences based on the creative development of new materials and new courses. I see ahead a great season of creativity and innovation, a season of powerful new ideas and new curricula all across this campus. I see inquiry and scholarship that is blessed with inspiration because it is done by faculty whose hearts are right, whose eyes are single to the glory of God, and who desire nothing in their work but to bless the lives of their students.

The second great imperative is to make a BYU-Idaho education available to many more of the young people of the Church. But this must be accomplished within the resources that the Board already has given us. We have begun this process with the three-track admission system. Because we learn and teach on this campus year-round, we serve many more students than the 11,600 or so who are on the campus at any one time. But we must continue to search for creative ways to organize, schedule, and calendar the educational experiences of our students so that more of them may come.

As we do so, I am convinced that we will find new ways to use information technology to reach more students and to deepen the learning experience of those we touch. In a day not far from now, we will be able to break down the barriers of time and space and connect our students on internships or between semesters to the university and to each other and create outstanding, interactive educational experiences. In these experiences students will teach one another in new and powerful ways. This capacity to educate effectively across time and space will allow us to leverage the capacity of the university and reach many more young people.

Imperative number three: we must lower the relative cost of education. BYU-Idaho is already a remarkably efficient school. We have taken to heart and learned well the lessons of
the pioneers: modest, disciplined, doing more with less, taking good care of what we have, willing to consecrate what we have, and trust in the Lord. In the years ahead we must continue to put our culture and those pioneer lessons to good use. Even as we seek to increase quality and serve more students, we must pursue new ways to be more productive. We will not get there just by squeezing the organization, nor will we get there by cutting corners. Our path is one of consecration and deeper knowledge of the processes of learning and teaching. With that depth and that consecration will come new ways of learning and teaching that will yield a higher quality experience while requiring relatively fewer resources per student.

There is great power on that path—power to weather adversity, power to extend the resources of the Church, and power to realize the mission of the university more effectively. But I believe there is something more at stake even than this. When I think of this third imperative, I see little girls and boys sitting in Primary classes in this country and, indeed, all over the world. These children will make and keep sacred covenants with the Lord. I believe the Lord desires to bless them and, like the army of Helaman, raise them up as a rightful generation of disciple-leaders all across the earth. That will take education—higher education of the kind we have talked about today. Now, I realize that most of these young people will never come to BYU-Idaho. But they will be blessed by what we learn here about learning by faith and delivering a high-quality education at relatively low cost.

That blessing will come in different ways. It may come through educational activities and programs initiated by the Church—in wards and branches, in stakes, and in seminaries and institutes. That blessing also may come to the young people of the Church, and to young people not of our faith, through universities outside the Church that take what we do here and apply it to their educational programs.

I believe that at BYU-Idaho we must learn to use new technologies and develop methods, materials, programs, and concepts that not only can be applied to our students on and off our campus, but also can be effectively and efficiently applied by others across the Church and, indeed, across the world. I am convinced that this university is in this valley where our pioneer heritage is deeply ingrained, where the people are humble and faithful, so that we can be a proving ground of great fidelity for education that will bless the young people of the Church worldwide.

As we reflect on these three wonderful imperatives, you might imagine that to do them all—to raise quality, to serve more students, and to lower relative costs—would be extremely difficult, if not impossible. Indeed, it is traditional and even natural to see in these three imperatives amenable dichotomies and trade-offs—higher quality but only with higher, not lower costs; serve more students, but only by raising costs, or reducing quality. But we are not bound by tradition, nor are we limited to our own understanding or to the wisdom of men. In short, this is a very unusual university.

Seven and a half years ago, Elder David Bednar stood where I am standing today and likened Ricks College to the ship that the great prophet Nephi built under the direction of the Lord. Elder Bednar noted that this was a ship of “curious workmanship” that was “not built after the manner of men,” and was, when complete, “exceedingly fine” (1 Nephi 18:14). He then said these words about Ricks College:

> May I suggest that Nephi’s experience in building that ship is a model for us at Ricks College as we prepare for and move into the next century. We, too, must build something we have never built before in order to go someplace we have never been before. (President David A. Bednar, “Inaugural Response,” February 27, 1998)

How prophetic those words would be. The ship of curious workmanship that was Ricks College is now BYU-Idaho. It is a great ship. And we are going places we have never been before. Indeed, we are going places no one has ever been before. As I look forward to the work before us, I take great comfort in another item of “curious workmanship” that was vital to the success of Nephi’s journey: the Liahona. Here is how Nephi described the Liahona:

> …As my father arose in the morning, and went forth to the tent door, to his great astonishment he beheld upon the ground a round ball of curious workmanship; and it was of fine brass. And within the ball were two spindles; and the one pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness. And…they did work according to the faith and diligence and heed which we did give unto them. And there was also written upon them a new writing, which was plain to be read, which did give us understanding concerning the ways of the Lord. (1 Nephi 16:10, 28-29)

With the ship that was like no other and with the advanced technology of the Liahona, Nephi made his journey and went exactly where the Lord wanted him to go. And so will we. To meet all three imperatives will require deep knowledge about learning and teaching and much greater understanding of the development of disciple-leaders. We will need new technologies, innovative ideas, new concepts, and inspired scholarship of “curious workmanship.” And we will have them! I doubt they will appear on our doorstep one bright morning. But I know they will come. They will come because of the faith and devotion and the unity of heart and mind in this university. They will come because of the love the Lord has for the precious young people who come here and those who will learn from what we do here. They will come as we move forward on the appointed course the Lord has set. When we have done all that we can with what we have, they will come. Of that I have no doubt.
In conclusion, I would like to share with you a passage of scripture that has come to have a special place in my heart. I believe it has great meaning for BYU-Idaho. The passage begins in the third verse of section 97 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

Behold, I say unto you, concerning the school in Zion, I, the Lord, am well pleased that there should be a school in Zion...

This is an inspiring verse. But as I read this passage on a recent morning, my eyes moved down the page, and I came to verses 8 and 9:

Verily I say unto you, all among them [everyone associated with the school] who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me.

For I, the Lord, will cause them to bring forth as a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream, that yieldeth much precious fruit.

As I read those verses, the strong impression came to me: this describes the Spirit of Ricks; this is BYU-Idaho. This is a school full of people united in their commitment to the Lord, striving to do His will, humble and teachable, willing to consecrate of their time and their talents in His work. And I believe that the promise in verse 9 is our promise: We have been "planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream...[and we shall bring forth] much precious fruit."

President Hinckley, it is in the spirit of these verses in the Doctrine and Covenants that I accept—no, I embrace—the charge you have given me. And I pledge to you and the Board and to my colleagues, to our students, to the alumni, to all who love this school, that I will live my life to be inspired to lead this university in a way worthy of your trust. I am committed to pursue the mission of BYU-Idaho with every bit of energy and ability the Lord has given me. I know that with all of us working as one, with the inspired guidance of the Board, this university will move forward on the steady, upward course the Lord has set. It will be Brigham Young University–Idaho, a university true to its heritage, true to its mission, everything the Lord wants it to be.

I leave you my testimony that God, our Father in Heaven, lives; that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the promised Messiah. He is the Redeemer and Savior of the world. I know that my Redeemer lives. His Church has been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. BYU-Idaho is an important part of the Restoration and of the great unfolding work of the Lord in our day. In that work, in this Church, Gordon B. Hinckley stands today where the Prophet Joseph stood.

He is the prophet of the Lord and leads the Lord's church on the earth. Of this I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.
The Temple and the College on the Hill

President Henry B. Eyring
First Counselor in the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Brigham Young University-Idaho
June 9, 2009

Thank you for that wonderful music. Thank you for the choice of the scripture. Thank you for singing songs we used to sing in this place some years ago. It has been a joy for Sister Eyring and me to return to this campus. You have been kind and gracious. We have felt welcomed home, but to a home changed for the better. The two-year college has become a great university. Beautiful buildings now cover slopes which, when we first arrived, were so far above the campus that I toured them on skis with my young sons. The student trailers where we lived in our first months have gone. I doubt that I could find now where that trailer park was, amongst the beauties of this campus.

Of all the improvements, what touched my heart most as we arrived Friday was the sight of the sacred temple on the hill, so close to the university that it seemed a part of it. When we came here in 1972, people spoke fondly of the “College on the Hill.” The two original pioneer buildings and even the ones built later seemed to stand only a few feet higher than the surrounding land. But to those who loved it and saw it as the Lord’s school, it appeared elevated. They felt they were going up, up to the college on the hill.

The scriptures speak of attending a temple as going up to the mountain of the Lord’s house. When searching for temple sites, the Lord’s prophets look for places where those who approach could have the feeling of going up. In my days serving in the Presiding Bishopric, I was charged at times with bringing back, from trips across the world, information about possible temple sites. The questions when I returned from the Lord’s prophets always included how the site would appear to the people coming up to it; they wanted those people to feel a sense of elevation. For the same reason, a temple’s interior is designed to give patrons the experience of rising.

The early Saints, as they created pioneer settlements in the American west, watched for elevated places for the future temples they dreamed would rise. They often referred to those places as, “Temple Hill.” That was true here. When we arrived, I was told that the small hospital, where our fourth son was born in our first year, was on “Temple Hill.” The early settlers had their dream fulfilled but not on the hill they expected. The hospital has now been replaced by one much larger and better. And a living prophet has placed a beautiful temple of the Lord high above yet integrally linked to His new university, which was born out of the little college on the hill.

My purpose today is to tell you something of the miracle it is to have both the Lord’s house and this university on one hill in Rexburg. Having described that miracle, I will suggest how best to recognize and so receive the blessings which can flow from it.

The miracle has at least three parts: first, that the temple and the university are side-by-side on one Rexburg hill; second, that the two were created together at this time; and third, that the few but significant differences between the university and the temple should combine so well to accomplish the Lord’s purposes.

First, there is the miracle of location. This is the restored Church of Jesus Christ. The prophecy for the latter days is being fulfilled. The gospel is being taken to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Yet, even with the generous spread of temples across the earth, only the tiniest fraction of the members can reach a temple of God without great sacrifice in time and means. And there are more millions in the spirit world who feel that pain and frustration that their faithful descendants feel that temple ordinances are not being made available to them. In the time I was in the Presiding Bishopric, I provided to the Lord’s prophets the information they requested to make the agonizing choice of in which place people could have the blessing of a temple within their reach and which would have to wait.

The prophets make similarly difficult decisions about Church universities. The chance to learn in such a faith-filled community as this is out of the reach—but not out of the hope—of thousands. Their missionary experiences and the blessings of the Perpetual Education Fund fuel their desires for learning in the powerful way possible here. In the time I was the Commissioner of Education for the Church, I helped the prophets respond to people begging for campuses like this. In many cases, they offered land and donations. Some offered already established schools if only we would take them over. Time after time I had to write kindly responses on behalf of the prophet to help faithful people accept his judgment that the Church could not responsibly invest and spend more in higher education.

Before serving in the Presiding Bishopric and as Commissioner of Education, I presided over what was then called Ricks College. In those days there were those who dreamed that the college would become a university. As the
Temples are also expensive, not only to build but also to operate. With a large temple just down the road in Idaho Falls, it was hard to imagine a temple in Rexburg. In fact, my later experience in the Presiding Bishopric seemed to confirm that conclusion: none of the lists of places needing and deserving a temple that I prepared for the Presidents of the Church had Rexburg on them.

I use the word miracle in describing the location of this university next to a temple on one hill because I know that only God could have done it. Human judgment would have kept Ricks College at two-year status and allocated the Church’s resources for higher education somewhere else. Human judgment would have placed the temple somewhere else. But human judgment could have foreseen neither smaller temples operated primarily by volunteers nor a university capable of serving many students at high quality and low cost. That this university and this temple are on a hill in Rexburg is a miracle because God, not man, revealed new designs for each and placed them here together.

God performed these miracles by revelation to his prophets, not through the people who advise them. I say that from personal experiences in providing advice on both universities and temples, and then watching God speak to his prophets, sometimes taking my help and sometimes more often not.

Just like Rexburg, Bountiful was never on the list of recommended or even possible temple sites during the time I was doing the work for the Prophet of God. In the late 1980s, in fact, a brilliant man working for the Presiding Bishopric and for me prepared a list, using careful statistical analysis, of one hundred places deserving temples. I delivered it to the President. Based on the criteria we used to make that list, Bountiful, which is where my family and I then lived, would not have appeared in the second- or third-hundred possibilities.

Not many weeks after I sent the list of one hundred sites to the President, our son John, the one born in the old Madison Memorial Hospital, came home from the Bountiful Seminary. He announced with some enthusiasm, “A dad in seminary today told me that the Church has purchased a site for a temple on Bountiful Boulevard.” I said to him with great emphasis, and some annoyance, “John, I am in charge of evaluating and buying sites for temples. If you look as if you even think that unfounded story might be true, people will believe it.”

Within a day or two, my wife said that she had heard in Relief Society that the Church had purchased a future temple site in Bountiful. I told her, “Kathy, I am in charge. That is an unfounded rumor, and you mustn’t even appear to believe it.”

The next day in the media, the Church announced the purchase of a temple site in Bountiful. I called Clair Bankhead, who worked with me buying temple properties and sites. I asked, “Clair, why didn’t you tell me?” He said, “President Benson told me to buy it and not to tell anyone. So I did what the Prophet asked.”

When John came home that day after hearing the news, he said with a smile, “Now I know what it means for you to be in charge.” So did I. And now so do you. The Prophet, who holds all the keys of the kingdom, including the keys of the sealing power, is directly accountable to the Lord for temples. Others may help, but the Lord decides and tells His Prophet. It was a miracle that Bountiful, twenty minutes from Salt Lake and twenty-five from Ogden, received a temple. Likewise, it is a gracious gift of God that Rexburg has a temple so close to Idaho Falls, when people across Asia and Africa and South America still sacrifice so much time and means to reach a temple of God. The miracle is that the Lord inspired, and the prophet obeyed. And now this hill has a temple on it next to a university.

As with the Rexburg temple, I know from personal experience that this university’s being on this hill is a miracle granted directly by God through a living prophet. One day in early 2000, President Hinckley asked me to follow him to his office after a Board of Education meeting. I was the Commissioner of Education at the time. I wondered why he had invited me there. After I sat down in his office, his first words were, “Hal, don’t you think it’s about time that Ricks College became a four-year school?”

After hearing my brief reply, which was one of support but some wonder, I got a great surprise. I saw as I gave him the advantages and the disadvantages which he asked for, it was clear that he had already decided that Ricks College would become BYU-Idaho. He said that I was the first person he told of his decision. He had never asked me or my staff for any information to help him consider such a decision. He simply knew.

And so I know that the decision to place on this hill a university next to a temple was made by the Lord directly through his prophet. In such matters of importance, it is the Lord’s way. Through the miracle of revelation, the Lord conveys His will to His living prophet. And that is a miracle for which we must be forever grateful.

The timing of placing the university and the temple together on this hill is yet another miracle of the Lord’s hand working on people. A remarkable group of teachers and leaders have been gathered at this university. They are finding ways to accelerate the rise in the quality of teaching and learning by increasing the influence of the Holy Ghost. Despite demographic declines in college-age Church members, the number seeking to come here has increased. The faculty and the leaders at the university have found a way not only to deal with the larger numbers but to do it frugally. Frugality and a spirit of sacrifice were put in place here long ago by a God who saw our time and the future before us. That frugality, among other important spiritual qualities, helped qualify Ricks College to become BYU-Idaho.
Just as the university is led by consecrated faculty and administrators, a gifted servant of God was called to this new temple on the hill as its president. He is, by his background and capacity, able to appreciate what great experiences the students will be having. He has called, through inspiration and with the counsel of local priesthood leaders, an army of consecrated volunteers to staff the temple. They invite members of the university community to temple service in a way that can lift them and elevate their learning experiences both in the Lord’s house and at His university.

The temple president and those who work with him know the goodness of the people in the community and the opportunities and challenges they encounter in establishing a special kind of university, a university fit for a temple hill. They are sensitive to the feelings of those who have the need for peace and generosity in the midst of great change. The president and his fellow temple workers will create an atmosphere of faith, hope, and charity which invites the Spirit, thus making the temple a place of spiritual refuge and a source of the revelation we will increasingly need on this hill.

The university will likewise encourage a thirst for learning by the Spirit. In concert with the temple, it will build students’ confidence that the Spirit can become a constant companion. The university and the temple are alike in teaching that change which improves teaching and learning.

The university president is charged with leading continuous improvement, and that requires change. The knowledge taught in universities is, through the discoveries of inspired men and women around the world, always expanding. In science, for example, even our notions of space and time are changing. The laws of men, such as trade treaties and tax codes, also change. Not only will the faculty of a great university stay abreast of these changes, they will find, with the help of the Spirit, ever-better ways to teach and help students learn the new knowledge.

Failing to change in the university will lead to failure. But we will not fail. The constancy of the temple will supply peace and a sure steady bearing, like a guiding star, for those navigating uncertain waters. The differences in the two places of learning complement each other.

We have been speaking of the blessings which will flow to those in this great university and to those who will come to the temple here. But blessings will also go from this university and temple on the hill into the surrounding valley and out to the world. In fact, the blessings we receive on this hill are only possible because of the goodness and sacrifices of many who are neither enrolled in nor employed by the university. They include ecclesiastical leaders drawn from surrounding stakes, leaders of government organizations, and the operators of businesses that serve the BYU-Idaho community.

All of the people who learn and serve here will be changed for the better. Wherever they go, they will be more eager to help others, more determined to keep promises, more confident that with God’s help we can accomplish hard things, and more inclined to give credit for success to others but mostly to God.

They will live in this community. They will go out to work as interns across the world. They will go to the professions and to companies and to governments. They will be admitted to other universities. And most importantly they will create families where what they have learned and taught will be passed on for generations.

I have been to a number of funerals and in homes lately where parents have done with children what we are trying to do within this university and this temple on the hill. They have taught and learned under the influence of the Holy Ghost. The Atonement of Jesus Christ has changed the hearts of children and grandchildren.

It is humbling and thrilling to see the change. I saw it in Rexburg this weekend as children so small that they needed a higher place to stand to reach the microphone bore testimony of the Savior and his prophets. I was amazed and humbled to hear words and feel spiritual power I would only expect from a mature member of the Church. I saw it later in the quiet manner of a couple speaking with a smile of the passing of one of them soon through the portal of death into the next world where they are sure they will be reunited. I saw it in the face and heard it in the voice of a widow living alone and in a wheelchair, waiting with faith for that kind of reunion. And with all her own trials, she handed a cheering present of Rexburg chocolates to my wife as we left.

What I have seen in my visit here assures me that the lofty goal of creating a community of learners changed by the Atonement—blessed by the Holy Ghost—is possible. It seems far above us, but it is in our reach with the Lord’s lifting hand.
It is He that has set the path before us. It is He that knows our hearts and our eternal potential. He put the university and the temple on this hill. Nephi gave us the encouragement to move upward in faith with these words:

But the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold, he hath all power unto the fulfillment of his words, and thus it is, Amen. (1 Nephi 9:6)

So, I am sure that by aligning ourselves with the Lord’s purposes we will, with His power, reach the lofty goals He has given us. Yet I have the concern that many times in the past people have acted to remove themselves from His lifting power. One source of that tragedy is forgetting others and the Savior, who has atoned for their sins. It is too easy to think we can climb alone and that we move up on our own power.

The Lord warned me about that years ago, when I was the young college president here. Ed Williams invited my oldest son to join him and other geology teachers and students to climb the South Teton. My son was ten years old. I had climbed many mountains before. I wanted to prove I could still do it, and I wanted that sense of victory for my son. Just four hundred feet from the summit, my son seemed tired. I could tell he was exhausted. All my drive to succeed urged me upwards. But there was something about the spot where we stood on a sunlit place, which made me say to the others, “You go on to the summit. I will stay here with my son.”

It is years later that I have come to understand why that wait with my son for the others to come back down was so satisfying and why I had such a feeling of success when we reached the bottom after dark. The climbs to the places God would have us go are never for us alone. If we forget that, we will not have His full power to lift us. Somehow the Lord let me feel that day in the mountains that the summit for me was on that sunlit place where I could set up our little stove and share hot soup with my son.

Losing sight of that need to climb with others could slow our progress toward dramatically improved teaching and learning. For instance, it would be easy to look for ways to help learners learn alone, using the wonders of technology. The same technology could give learners the experience of helping others they love to learn with them. Similarly, it would be tempting to increase the reported number of temple ordinances without regard to whether the patron was having the experience of lifting a loved one who died without the chance to claim the blessings of the temple. The summit of salvation, or joy in families in the celestial kingdom, is not reachable alone. That is what the Lord wants for us and our families. To have the help of His power, we must never forget that.

Another way to disqualify ourselves for His lifting power is to begin to ignore what God has done and to exaggerate what they have done. That begins to happen in the good times. We can easily start to think that we created prosperity with our own labors and wisdom. We start calling attention to our accomplishments. We pray for help less often and with less fervor. And so the Lord’s power lessens in our lives. In time we can be left more and more to our own power. That danger is all the greater here because you are being prospered, and you will be prospered even more.

The best prevention for that drift to forgetting others and taking undue credit is clear. You promise to do it each time you renew your baptismal covenant in taking the sacrament: “Always remember Him.” He is our exemplar. He did what He did for His Father and for His Father’s children. He gave credit to His Father for the blessing of the harvest. Because I know that you will do the very best you can to keep your covenants, I am sure the great blessings you seek in this university and this temple will be granted. And so I am confident that you can avoid the hazards of selfishness and pride, which would decrease your access to the power of the Lord to lift you on your climb.

I testify that God the Father lives and loves you. His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, atoned for our sins and broke the bands of death. The Holy Ghost has testified to all of us of truth, of hope, and of the joy of the pure love of God. I leave you my blessing that you may by the power of the Holy Ghost see the course God has set before you and feel the confidence that you are lifted by His power and surrounded by His love on the journey. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ☩
It was a pioneer’s heart that enabled the Lord to gather His Saints at the opening of this dispensation. Those early pioneers brought a spirit of frugality, a faith and optimism for the unknown, a longing for prophetic direction, and a spirit of personal sacrifice to their trek west. It was those same attributes that allowed the Lord to reveal the ideas and innovations needed to gather His people. For the pioneers, innovation started with vanguard companies and wagon trains. Later developments included handcart companies and the Perpetual Emigration Fund. These subsequent advancements were different in design and less familiar than the earlier innovations, but they allowed many more Saints to gather to Zion.

At BYU-Idaho we draw on that same pioneer’s heart, a gift of the early settlers who came to this valley and eventually founded this college. The pioneer’s heart has been preserved by the Lord in the very location of this campus. It has been carefully cultivated in the Spirit of Ricks. Regardless of its origin, the pioneer’s heart was held in this valley “for such a time as this” when the Lord would significantly expand His educational gathering across the Church.

On June 21, 2000, President Gordon B. Hinckley announced the creation of a new university, stating:

BYU-Idaho will operate on an expanded year-round basis, incorporating innovative calendaring and scheduling while also taking advantage of advancements in technology which will enable the four-year institution to serve more students.

In the ensuing years, a pioneering faculty and staff created a three-track calendar, the BYU-Idaho Learning Model, and an unambiguous student-centered culture. They developed a cohort-based online curriculum and launched the global Pathway program to open educational opportunities across the Church. Since President Hinckley’s announcement, the number of students at BYU-Idaho has tripled even as the relative cost per student has declined—a miracle within the Church and a model for “rethinking education” more generally. Let me pause to thank my colleagues on the faculty and staff. None of this would have been possible without your sacrifice, dedication, and effort. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has declared, What you are undertaking [at BYU-Idaho]… is virtually unprecedented in the world of higher education. You are making your own inspired, pioneering journey.

And as Elder David A. Bednar has said, “The creation of BYU-Idaho is one of the most important educational events of the Restoration.”

Today, we remain on a “steady, upward course” of growth and discovery. We face a dual challenge: to continue to strengthen our core campus experience, even as we pioneer new ways to reach students around the world. Quoting President Henry B. Eyring:

It is possible to serve world needs as well as those of our local students if those who come here have a personal self-discipline and… a spirit of sacrifice.

Let me first address this campus. One of the hallmarks of BYU-Idaho is the personal investment of faculty who unapologetically build their professional focus on teaching and advising students. That this institution has been able to expand so dramatically while preserving this individual attention is a testament to the university’s design and to the character of the faculty. I see the faculty’s love for students leading to greater discovery in instructional strategy, measurement, and learning from peers. I see a faculty creating innovative curriculum at the intersection of disciplinary depth and instructional excellence. I see the scholarship of learning and teaching at BYU-Idaho increasingly reaching a wider community of practice.

We must remember that being student-centered goes beyond simply being teaching oriented. Providentially, BYU-Idaho’s founding design included an emphasis on applied learning. Under President David A. Bednar, university-wide internship and Activities programs were developed. The already high levels of participation in these programs can be further expanded and more tightly connected to our academic programs. There is a temptation in higher education to fall back on approaches that, while professionally familiar, may ironically detract from meeting students’ needs. We must consistently ask, “Why are we doing this, and are there ways of doing it better?” For example, applied degrees that are not bachelor’s centric will benefit many of our students. Separately, we must develop more rigorous and holistic ways to measure and track student outcomes. Clearly, some of those efforts will be academic. But if we are truly student-centered, we must also...
be able to strengthen student outcomes that include life skills, career stewardship, family life, and spiritual leadership.  

Next, let me speak to the needs of students who will never physically come to Rexburg. If designed correctly, the innovations on campus and online will be mutually reinforcing. Our online organization has the responsibility to learn from the campus experience. Our campus faculty will, in turn, bless students they will never meet through the curriculum and course content they create for online students. But even as we draw on the principles, outcomes, and spirit of the campus, we must avoid the temptation to impose the exact pattern of a campus model with online students who may have very different needs. For example, as with classroom instruction, we must strengthen the scholarship of learning and teaching for online instruction. Similarly, curricular innovations that are less bachelor’s centric, including certificates and applied associate degrees, will benefit numerous campus students. However, for many of our online students, these programs may be their primary academic experience. The university must develop formal and informal capabilities to understand the needs of non-campus students. Finally, as online learning continues to expand, we will need to amplify opportunities for local gathering in centers of strength around the world.

As we reflect on the need to continue to build both our campus and our online programs, we must recognize the implications of a university with increasing reach and scope across the Church. It is incumbent upon BYU-Idaho to continue to find ways to expand its reach while decreasing relative costs to the Church. Moreover, part of our responsibility will be to work beyond the boundaries of the university itself. We must increasingly look for ways to collaborate with other entities within the Church Educational System, across LDS membership, and even in missionary work. The Lord will reveal the pattern for this to happen, but the university must continue to prepare its heart in ways that will allow it to be a resource to a worldwide Church.  

President Kim B. Clark often summarized the mission of BYU-Idaho as developing disciple leaders. President Eyring has said that “every innovation, every change, [should be] measured against this test of the heart.” To build disciple leaders in the last days, we must help our students have the conviction to stand as witnesses of Jesus Christ. We must also teach the doctrine of the family with increasing force and application, for “marriage is more than something personal—it is a ‘[post of responsibility]’, an office” —a disciple’s covenant. Our students must understand the principle of moral agency and learn how to act and not be acted upon.  

Finally, disciple leaders will need to understand and apply the Atonement in their lives. These attributes of disciple leadership will increasingly prepare our students to fulfill Jacob Spori’s prophetic vision:

The seeds we’re planting today will grow and become mighty oaks, and their branches will run all over the earth. Indeed, BYU-Idaho’s influence on the world will continue unabated through the lives and impact of its graduates.

In the painting by Minerva Teichert entitled: “Handcart Pioneers,” we see both our past and our future as the pioneers enter the valley. Looking back, may we remember the pioneer’s heart that enabled the BYU-Idaho educational gathering to commence. Looking forward, may we recognize the purpose for our gathering as we work together to build disciple leaders. I know that the Savior lives and that He loves each of us. It is through His Atonement that we can change and become more than who we are today. I pray for a pioneer’s heart and ask for the Savior’s mercy and enabling power in this responsibility. We are blessed by living prophets who lead and guide this Church and this university. The gospel has been restored on the earth today, and BYU-Idaho is part of that great work, I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.
These exercises are designed to mark the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Brigham Young University-Idaho. Today, on behalf of the Board of Trustees and the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I install you, Henry Johnson Eyring, as president of Brigham Young University-Idaho and confer upon you the authority, the rights, the responsibilities, and the challenges associated with this office.

As is the custom, I deliver to you, President Eyring, a formal charge to guide your service.

First, you are to place the Lord Jesus Christ, whose school this is, at the heart of your service. His purposes are to be yours, as nearly as you can discern them; His light, the beacon to guide your feet; and His love, your source of courage, confidence, and motivation.

Second, you are to serve and guide all who teach, lead, learn, and labor here by acknowledging and treating them as children of a loving Heavenly Father, with the divine potential to become like Him. He loves and values each equally. He admitted each into His school of mortality with hope that he or she will discover divine capacity and the pathway to becoming His rightful heir. Your charge is to help as many of them as you can walk that challenging journey back home.

Third, your charge is to find ways to infuse the Spirit of God into the experiences of all who learn and serve in this university. That Spirit will be a key to their success in the strenuous effort they must make to learn and so rise to their potential. President Brigham Young gave a charge to Karl G. Maeser that is also a promise: “You ought not to teach even the alphabet or the multiplication tables without the Spirit of God.” The promise is that it can be done.

Fourth, you are to take full advantage of the Lord’s promise that He will direct the path of His faithful servants. You must study and pray to know what you are to do. You must counsel with others and study whatever facts you can gather. When you then pray and ask in faith, you may expect to receive inspiration. When the path you feel inspired to pursue would in any way diverge from that which has been previously approved by the Board of Trustees, you are to prepare and present a recommendation to that Board. Your purpose will be not to win agreement but to welcome confirmation and correction equally. The Board, with a prophet at its head, will point the way to safety.

Fifth, you are to demonstrate and teach gratitude for those who have preceded you in the Lord’s work of building this university from its humble beginnings toward its divine destiny. They each gave enough and sacrificed enough to qualify for His pouring out blessings upon this school, both spiritual and temporal—blessings beyond what they could foresee. The Lord did not make growth easy for them, nor will He for you. He did not make destiny clear for them, but He revealed the next step as He inspired the taking of it. He went before their faces, and He will go before yours. Your charge is to preserve and increase gratitude to the Lord for this university and those who have served Him here.

Finally, you are charged to exemplify in your life and family the gospel ideals of Christlike love and perfect fidelity. You are to treat your family members as your most precious treasure. You will, by placing them above all earthly achievements, inspire for good all who are blessed to come within the power of your example and influence.
All meetings at BYU-Idaho are a celebration of the goodness and power of our Savior Jesus Christ. That is especially so as we formally reflect upon the mission of this university, which is His. Today we are blessed to have that mission embodied in eight former Ricks College and BYU-Idaho presidents. They have led the transformation of an inspired but obscure junior college which is now a world-renowned university. All brought unique capabilities but looked to the Savior for guidance. I have been blessed to know and be guided by each of these presidents, beginning with my father. He and my mother, Kathleen, accepted the assignment to preside over Ricks College sight unseen. They traded tenure at Stanford and the guest house on my grandparents’ California hilltop estate for a single-wide student trailer in Rexburg, during one of its fiercest winters. I felt a sense of pride in the move, announcing in second grade show-and-tell, “I’m moving to Rexburg, Iowa.”

President Eyring came to Ricks College during a challenging season of political tensions, cultural revolution, economic malaise, and a demographic downturn among college-aged Church members. He found inspiration for the future partly by looking to the college’s past. In his inaugural address, he referenced “a long tradition of open admissions,” including “providing education for those past the normal years of college.”

President Eyring further noted that, “The school has a long tradition…in attempting to bridge the campus and life away from the campus.” He cited “a supervised home-study program in agriculture and home economics,” which “included guidance in social and religious activities.”

President Eyring also declared, “I believe that the community which education should serve is the whole world…just as our obligation is to our local students, to prepare them to serve the world, we must also find ways for this college to serve young people whose needs are shaped by a great variety of cultures and situations, and who may not be able to come to this campus.”

President Eyring was blessed by an unusual assignment from the Brethren to forecast the college education of the future. That assignment would prepare him for a lifetime of service to the Church Educational System. But as Ricks College’s president, he spent more time in practical tasks: raising money to fill budget gaps, consolidating academic units, and encouraging haircuts for men and modest attire for women.

In 1977, Bruce and Marie Hafen brought to Ricks the intellectual capability and modesty of accomplished scholars. They reinforced a tradition of intellectual rigor at Ricks. Later, as my law school dean, President Hafen taught members of the law review to advance the frontier of knowledge, not via attempted revolution, but respected addition.

In 1985, Joe and Barbara Christensen came to Ricks. They had presided over the Missionary Training Center in Provo, where they taught me and my fellow missionaries both doctrine and discipline. Under their leadership, Ricks College continued to acquire the qualities of what Elder David A. Bednar would later call a “disciple preparation center,” or DPC.

In 1989, Steve Bennion arrived in Rexburg with his uncanny memory for names and his hundred-decibel “Hello!” both of which I admired while serving as one of his trustees at Southern Utah University. Steve and Marjorie powerfully display the Spirit of Ricks, a treasured hallmark of BYU-Idaho.

Elder David A. and Sister Susan Bednar came to Ricks in 1997. By recognizing Ricks College as a ship of curious workmanship, they prepared the institution for President Gordon B. Hinckley’s unexpected announcement that it would become a four-year university. The Bednars, kind mentors to Sister Eyring and me, guided the new BYU-Idaho as it assumed a unique, expanded mission.

With Elder Bednar’s 2004 call as an Apostle, President Hinckley asked Robert M. Wilkes to temporarily take BYU-Idaho’s helm. President Wilkes kept this curious ship on its charted course, drawing upon more than three decades of service at Ricks College.

Along with Harry J. Maxwell, who played a similar role between Presidents Eyring and Hafen, Brother Wilkes knew me as a pre-teen likely to be found doing homework in my father’s office after school. Both men generously treated me as though I were a peer.

By the time Kim and Sue Clark arrived from the Harvard Business School, in 2005, BYU-Idaho was under full sail. Only a captain as bold as HBS Dean Kim Clark would have immediately called for three new “imperatives”—serving more students, at an affordable cost, while raising quality.

Under President Clark the reach of the university expanded

Inaugural Response

President Henry J. Eyring
President of Brigham Young University-Idaho
Brigham Young University-Idaho
September 19, 2017
dramatically, with its online and Pathway programs beginning
to fulfill President Eyring’s call to serve the whole world.
By then I had returned to Rexburg and was blessed to have
President Clark as both an inspirational employer and a
devoted home teacher.
When President Clark G. Gilbert and his wife, Christine,
succeeded the Clarks, it was a homecoming. A decade earlier,
President Gilbert launched the Pathway program, with modest
help from me and much more from the founding members
of what is now BYU-Pathway Worldwide. President Gilbert
brought renewed focus on the Three Imperatives of keeping
costs low and quality high, while serving students of varying
levels of academic performance. He also reminded us of the
“birthright” conditions attached to President Hinckley’s
creation of BYU-Idaho. President Gilbert emphasized our
responsibility to serve “everyday students” and to eschew
academic traditions that would distract us from them.
President Gilbert has left us well-prepared to welcome
a wave of new students, both in Rexburg and online. But
we also face the challenge of retaining currently enrolled
students, particularly our freshmen. As at most universities, a
heartrending number leave prematurely, suspending at least
temporarily their progress toward a college credential. Some
take with them the burden of financial debts. Many bear the
added burden of lost confidence and faith.
Ricks College and BYU-Idaho have a long tradition of
meeting the needs of these students, largely through individual
employees who seek the Holy Ghost’s guidance in their
ministration. A particular hallmark of this institution has been
an anxious concern for students who doubt their place here. But
now our student body growth, along with the more complex
and rigorous curricular offerings of a four-year institution,
compounds the challenge of ministering one-by-one.
Providentially, we have been blessed with innovative
approaches to helping all students, especially newcomers.
Under former Academic Vice President Fenton Broadhead,
we launched a unique online tool called I-Plan, which helps
students as they explore and pursue their plan of college study.
In addition, a team led by Professor Mark Orchard has
piloted a College Success Course designed to build awareness
and confidence among freshmen. And, under the optimistic
leadership of Greg Hazard, the employees and student
volunteers in our Academic Support Centers are innovatively
tutoring more than 12,000 students annually. Importantly,
we continue to seek the Spirit’s guidance in shepherding and
safeguarding each student.
Nonetheless, it is challenging to provide Ricks College-
quality ministration in an increasingly large and sophisticated
university. In tackling this challenge, we are grateful for our
partnership with BYU-Pathway Worldwide. As we create
practical online courses and degrees for Pathway students, we
are reminded of the unique learning needs of college students
who may be at risk.

Pathway has helped us see more clearly the gap between
the needs of many BYU-Idaho students and the sophisticated
nature of our bachelor’s degree programs. When Ricks College
became BYU-Idaho, it was important to accreditation experts,
such as Rhonda Seamons, to thoughtfully consider academic
best-practice. Of particular concern in the early years was the
transferability of credits to other institutions. Even today, with
our university’s innovative reputation well established, we must
thoughtfully prepare bachelor’s degree graduates for potential
application to master’s and doctoral programs. We must also
meet the expectations of employers and professional licensure
boards. In designing bachelor’s degrees, we have begun with
those ends in mind.
That curriculum strategy has succeeded admirably.
BYU-Idaho has placed graduates with the most discerning
employers, graduate programs, and university faculties. They
have fulfilled President Henry B. Eyring’s prophecy of our
students’ becoming “natural leaders,” even in the most elite
organizations.
Yet our graduation statistics tell us quantitatively what
we know intuitively: that curriculum designed to meet
the needs of the most capable and ambitious students can
present problems for some. For example, a degree program
designed to prepare our students for admission to graduate
school or for professional licensure is likely to presume a high
level of preparedness and subject-matter affinity. It is also
likely to have many required courses, necessitating an early
declaration of a major for students to have a good chance at
four-year graduation.
The design of most general education programs likewise
presumes higher education preparedness and certainty.
Lawrence Lowell, a Harvard president who wielded lasting
influence on American higher education, declared,

The best type of liberal education in our complex
modern world aims at producing men who know a little
of everything and something well.5

During Lowell’s twenty years at Harvard’s helm, he
institutionalized the now-standard bachelor’s degree design,
with a rigorous, far-reaching general education program for
lower-classmen, followed by deep specialization.
This model worked well for the male scions of Boston’s
privileged Brahmin class, who were well-prepared for college
and likely to be considering graduate school. But this is not
the situation of many BYU-Idaho students. Our mission is
different, and our curriculum design must be as well.
As at other universities, our students are blessed with the
choice of numerous degrees designed to ready them for
graduate school and professional licensure. For well-prepared
and forward-looking students, degrees created with these ends
in mind can be a boon.
But for many others, particularly those not fully prepared
for college, we must begin with both the end and the beginning
in mind. For these students, the beginning of college is fraught with difficulty and risk. The beginning is when they are living away from home for the first time, with life’s distractions and complications at their highest. The beginning is when many may lack academic competence and doubt that they are “college material.” It is also when they are prone to enroll in large general education classes taught by professors with whom they are relatively unlikely to forge a long-term relationship. In sum, the beginning is when danger is greatest and thus our curriculum decisions and support activities are most vital.

New learning tools and services such as I-Plan, the College Success course, and expanded tutoring are already lessening the academic risks of the early semesters at BYU-Idaho. And our faculty members, always focused on “the one” and sensitive to the Spirit’s promptings, are giving more attention than ever to potential “lost sheep.” Importantly, our students themselves are fulfilling President Eyring’s prophecy that they will “see the greatest work of their lives as nurturing [one another] as the Savior did.”

Yet, a greater margin of safety can be built into the curriculum itself. In recent years, we have been developing bachelor’s degree programs that hark back to the parsimonious design envisioned at the university’s creation, when our slogan was “Rethinking Education.” These broad-ranging degrees, including interdisciplinary degrees being created under the direction of Dean Danae Romrell, include a major that constitutes only a modest minority of the credits needed to earn a bachelor’s credential. A wonderful example is a new bachelor’s degree in Data Science, designed by faculty members from three departments with help from colleagues across the university as well as outside advisors. This degree includes courses in statistics, computer science and information technology, design, communication, and business.

It also leaves room for credit-bearing internships and complementary collections of courses from other fields. Importantly, the frugal design of this major allow freshman students to sample curiosity-stimulating introductory courses from multiple majors before making a long-term commitment. Similarly valuable is the flexibility to change majors without incurring a graduation delay.

This Data Science degree includes another vital feature, the nesting of a certificate and an associate degree within the bachelor’s program. This design, spearheaded by President Gilbert, provides a valuable credential in the event of a bachelor’s program, viewing graduate education as only one alternative path. He has often declared that, when we prepare students for the world of work, they are also prepared for graduate education. However, the converse does not necessarily hold. The path to earning and beneficially applying a graduate degree has always been fraught with risk. But that is true now more so than ever. At a minimum, our students need help in answering graduate program-specific questions about graduation rates and timetables, debt loads, career placement, and earning prospects.

Better than the most thorough risk analysis, though, is a bachelor’s degree that prepares graduates to be “natural leaders who know how to teach and how to learn,” and who, in the words of President Eyring, “will become legendary for their capacity to build the people around them and to add value wherever they serve.” Such BYU-Idaho graduates naturally succeed in their homes and workplaces, receiving important assignments and promotions with or without a graduate degree.
Moreover, students who choose to pursue graduate education with this kind of college degree are also well-prepared. Thanks to their natural leadership abilities, which are enhanced by well-designed group work and other pedagogies collectively referred to as the BYU-Idaho Learning Model, these students pass what Commissioner Clark calls “The Doorway Test,” which is this: If you are a professor, and a graduate student appears in your office doorway, are you glad? In other words, do you anticipate that the time you invest in that student will be worth your investment?

BYU-Idaho graduates have decided advantages in passing The Doorway Test. They are valued because their practical training and leadership abilities set them apart from colleagues who are merely technically competent. Even more so, they are valued for a quality that their colleagues sense but cannot identify: it is the image of Heavenly Father and the Savior in their countenances. These BYU-Idaho graduates, like their Ricks College forebears, are also recognized and valued for their humility and eagerness to serve others, especially the downtrodden.

I saw those qualities manifested at a wrenching time. On an early summer Saturday in 1976, the just-completed Teton Dam burst with little warning. My brother Stuart and I watched the ensuing flood from the dry farm of our home teacher, Craig Moore, high up in the hills east of Rexburg. We could only imagine the damage being done by what appeared to be a silent, slowly expanding brown lake.

The bursting of the dam drove thousands from their homes. With nowhere else to go, the evacuees came to the higher ground of the college, which opened its dormitories to all. Throughout that summer, the college was a temporal and spiritual sanctuary. The experience was life-changing for both flood victims and those who helped them muck out their homes.

Significantly, no one was required to leave the campus unprepared for the challenges of recovery and rebuilding that awaited them. There were no “dropouts” among those sheltered in the college dorms, only successful “graduates.” They were aided by thousands of volunteers who boarded buses in surrounding communities and states, riding through the night to spend a day cleaning out the homes of strangers. Many of the volunteers were Ricks College students, who returned to campus three months later having gained vital qualities of natural leadership and increased sensitivity to the Spirit’s guidance.

Such is our challenge and opportunity today. Thanks to prophetic direction and the financial support of the Church, we stand on higher ground. Through our integral association with BYU-Pathway Worldwide, we are blessed to be both a haven and a light to the world. We are similarly blessed as we minister to one another on this campus. May we honor our institutional birthright by building upon the providential preparations of the past and qualifying for heaven’s continuing direction.

In closing, I bear testimony that this university is the Lord’s. I am grateful for my testimony of Him, which is a gift initially bestowed upon me by my mother, who cannot be with us today. Mother loved Rexburg and this campus, cherishing it as a spiritual sanctuary, a haven for her family. She now sits where the veil is thinner still. May we continue to qualify for such thinning. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ❧

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
7. Ibid. See also discussion of rethinking education. Note: under the BYU-Idaho presidency of David A. Bednar the theme “rethinking education” was adopted.
The Spirit of BYU-Idaho

President Henry B. Eyring
First Counselor in the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Brigham Young University-Idaho
September 19, 2017

Elder Oaks, members of the Board of Trustees, Commissioner Clark, past presidents of this educational institution, members of the faculty and staff, distinguished guests, brothers and sisters, and President Henry J. Eyring: It is an honor to be here with you today.

I mentioned Henry’s name last because I knew he would prefer it. He inherited that desire from his grandfather, Professor Henry Eyring, who routinely put his name last on the list of authors of the hundreds of scientific articles to which he contributed. He put above his own the name of every colleague, every graduate student, and once, a struggling college physics student who happened to be his son.

President Henry J. Eyring knows what his grandfather knew: great joy comes from building confidence in others and seeing growth in their ability to think and to do. It only takes a few teachers with this understanding to transform a little school into a great university. And those they lift go out in an exponential process of transforming others to build institutions across the world.

I saw that once when I was asked to lecture at a great university in Korea. I expected only a few people would come to hear me. To my surprise, the great lecture hall was packed with professors and students.

I asked my host why there was such a crowd.

He said quietly,

These are the students of your father’s young colleague, who became a great professor in Korea. These are his students, and their students, and their students’ students. They came in gratitude. I think some of them saw your name and came because they thought you were him.

President Henry Johnson Eyring’s grandfather passed on to him, and to me, a sense of how great universities are built. They are communities of people with an insatiable thirst to know what is true and what is good. They work so hard that their ears ring. They miss meals, and they get up at night to write down ideas that came in their dreams.

But it takes more than hard work and personal achievement to satisfy them. Those real builders of universities cannot fully enjoy their accomplishment until they help someone else learn as they have learned. We know that from our own experience. Like you, I have marveled that a master in some field would take time to help me understand what he had learned and how he did it. He gave me confidence and created in me the desire to, in turn, teach someone else. Those builders of great universities draw others around them as colleagues. They find joy in giving others confidence that they can do more than they thought that they could.

Those of us who have taught, learned, served, and led in this school have seen that miracle many times. It is more frequent here because of the faith of the people who have gathered into this school. They share a faith that every child of Heavenly Father is potentially perfectible. And they believe that joy comes from helping someone move toward that perfection. You have seen this happen in the variety of experiences that make up the curriculum of a student here.

I have felt it myself in the Tetons with two professors of geology, in the classroom with my co-teacher in a religion class, and in the students coming to the home of my neighbor, a professor of biology, where, in the evenings, he tutored and encouraged them to believe they could become physicians.

A great college and university are communities of such people. There is a spirit of optimism that comes from an assurance that every person has remarkable potential to learn and to become better. There is an intense determination to learn what is true and good. And the people in that community find more joy in helping others learn than in getting something for themselves.

Those feelings exist in people in many colleges and universities. But here at BYU-Idaho, it is realistic to expect that those feelings will be more intense, more widespread, and more enduring. Here we take the Savior as our model and mentor in all our service.

Just as I have given President Eyring his charge as the president of this university, the Lord has given all of us a charge, accompanied by a promise. It seems to apply particularly in this special university community:

Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand;

Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things
which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms—

That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you. (Doctrine and Covenants 88:78–80)

Such a charge and so great a promise tells us something of the destiny of this university. In those three verses, the Lord paints a marvelous picture of what will happen in His school as we qualify with our faith and work for His grace. And we have the advantage of knowing the Lord’s purpose. It is that we will be instructed and prepared in all things to magnify every opportunity God will grant us.

With this scriptural charge in mind, I think I understand better the charge I received at my inauguration as president of Ricks College. On that day, after my father gave an address, President Marion G. Romney of the First Presidency praised the accomplishments of the faculty and staff in lifting the students to meet the standard of secular learning the Lord has set for us. Then he added what I felt was a prophetic declaration about the destiny of this school:

Her accomplishments in these secular fields, which concern worldly things, do not . . . fulfill her destiny.

Her destiny lies in spiritual things, with respect to which there is a different measure of achievement.1

I learned from President Romney that the spiritual dimension of our destiny would be measured in the lives of the teachers, the students, and all who serve here. He referred to these words from the Doctrine and Covenants:

Blessed are the poor who are pure in heart, whose hearts are broken, and whose spirits are contrite, for they shall see the kingdom of God coming in power and great glory unto their deliverance; for the fatness of the earth shall be theirs.

For behold, the Lord shall come, and his recompense shall be with him, and he shall reward every man, and the poor shall rejoice. (Doctrine and Covenants 56:18–19)

President Romney then quoted another revelation describing the time when the Lord will make that accreditation visit to His university here:

When I shall come in my glory, . . . they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day.

And the earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance; and they shall multiply and wax strong, and their children shall grow up without sin unto salvation.

For the Lord shall be in their midst, and his glory shall be upon them, and he will be their king and their lawgiver. (Doctrine and Covenants 45:56–59)

I pondered President Romney’s charge when it was given. I knew that every school in the Church had been charged with teaching both secular and spiritual truth. Why, then, would the Lord want the spiritual dimension to be preeminent here?

I came to believe that the Lord knew what this school would someday become. He knew there was a spirit in that little college, and He wanted that spirit to be preserved as He lifted it to become a great university. In those days, the students and faculty spoke often of the “Spirit of Ricks.”

The spirit was not in the buildings or the campus, though you could feel it there. Rather, it was in the hearts of a community of people who thought of themselves as poor by worldly measures—who were pure in heart, had hearts that were broken, and whose spirits were contrite. It was a place where people lifted up each other’s hands when they hung down because they had received the truth of the Savior’s gospel and had taken the Spirit as their guide.

I now see more clearly what President Romney meant as he gave assurance that if we work to preserve it, the spirit for which this school has always been known would continue and flourish. As we become a great university community, the Lord would have us retain that same spirit and magnify it in the hearts of those who gather here.

That spirit will continue to draw people here as it has in the past. You will not have to recruit faculty or advertise for students if you continue to build and nurture the spirit of BYU-Idaho. If you build it, they will come. And, they will come because in their hearts they want to be part of this community.

And then, in some future day, when the Lord comes, you will receive His thanks. You will come to know that He has been smiling on the little things you have done so faithfully to prepare this university community for that great day.

I testify that Jesus Christ lives. He guides and blesses all who lead, study, teach, and serve Him here. The Holy Ghost has lifted and comforted us today and will in the days ahead. Our Heavenly Father has heard our prayers and has sent the Holy Ghost to give us courage to move forward and upward as the Lord builds this university in our hearts. I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.  

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