Foundational Addresses
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

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. 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 longstanding 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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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 in this 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 us. 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 once a week in the afternoon following school. I remember teachers. Back in the days when I attended Primary, it was held every week with a number of my friends to Primary once a week in the afternoon following school. I remember teachers. Back in the days when I attended Primary, it was held once a week in the afternoon following school. I remember teachers. Back in the days when I attended Primary, it was held once a week in the afternoon following school.

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. 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 18. 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 had season tickets and enjoyed attending almost every Arkansas Razorback basketball fan. We were and still are avid Arkansas Razorback basketball fans. We had season tickets and enjoyed attending almost every Arkansas Razorback basketball 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,” 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 institution for young 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 un instructed and safe midcourse corrections. Rather, as we navigate, we must remain firmly 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 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 that in this Church that God is at the helm, and that his servants are inspired, directed and led by his influence.

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 (1) to build testimonies of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and encourage living its principles, (2) to provide a quality education for students of diverse interests and abilities, (3) to prepare students for further education and employment, and for their roles as citizens and parents, and (4) to 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 has been trained may be likened to the ship with great engines and a powerful captain, but without rudder, chart, compass, or definite destination. When we

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President David A. Bednar
President of Ricks College
Ricks College
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add to the man, so trained, spiritual training, then it is as if we add to the ship, with its wonderful machinery, a compass, a chart, a rudder, and a dependable intelligence which controls the whole machinery, above and below deck, so that the vessel may reach a safe haven, according to a definite purpose.

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, 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 in logic, and in practical and spiritual truths, as his tutor shall require, according to his ability, seeing the entrance of the word groweth light, it groweth understanding to the simple.

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: once in the testimony of the eight witnesses, twice in relation to the Lord, and three times in the testimony of the two sons. It seems unlikely that he knew much about or had experience with the tools and skills necessary to construct an ocean-going vessel. It seems unlikely that he knew much about or had experience with the tools and skills necessary to construct the ship.

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

Even Nephi’s brothers, who initially opposed the idea of constructing the ship and 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 and 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.

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.

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 351 full-time teaching faculty on this campus. These dedicated teachers have provided a total of 1,209 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 forgo 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 1998 with no such experience 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 DaVoven 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 DaVoven.

I asked President Dustin what DaVoven 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:

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.

All truth, spiritual as well as secular, is manifested through the spirit of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is a revelation, 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.

Certainly, we might rationalize, we are doing well because our standards are so much different from those generally found in the world.

Brothers 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 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.

DaVoven 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.
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 the more numbers 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 146 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, sociability 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 PRODUCES 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. As an inaugural 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 by 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 were 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.”

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 fail for one another, love one another, and strengthen one another. 147

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. 148

NOTES
8. 1 Nephi 17:8.
9. 1 Nephi 18:1, emphasis added.
11. 1 Nephi 11:36.
15. 3 Nephi 11.
16. 3 Nephi 17.
17. 3 Nephi 18; 3 Nephi 28.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 130:2.
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 church 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 a room where tears were 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. I went over to him and we talked. I said, “I recognize you, you’ve been in such a place and in such a moment, music, what happened here today has been happening here for me, he remembered the feelings of the gospel of Jesus Christ he had met. So of all the things that he would remember about me, he thought I recognized, and I realized that he probably wasn’t the only one in that room who was touched that day.

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 closing security at the airport. Some changes will be larger. Those in the National Guard and the Reserves may be called away from their families for extended periods of time. Some changes will be larger. Those in the National Guard and the Reserves may be called away from their families for extended periods of time.

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 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 4:5 of the Doctrine and Covenants, verses 26–27:

And in that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars, and there shall be great tribulation among men, 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 invention will not wane; 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 do 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 that you may not have asked or even been aware of. When I was in the Air Force, I was in a world where I was called upon to make changes. 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 we were because you remembered “I know who I am. I’m a crazy, mixed-up mess, still trying to figure out who I am, and I remember, yeah, I remember who I am.”

And of course, 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, 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 (or [you] don’t), 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 says to it. You’ve got a unique message and I’ve 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.” I want this to be about you. And so every thirty days, or however many students there were, my turn would come and I would read from chapter {of } Corinthians the same verse:

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

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. Gascue 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 you, really. He didn’t know me. He described 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 know
eyewitness that God is speaking to you. He really is. He knows who you are—each of you distinctly, 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 reduce, the best of what the school has always been. From 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 we started: by keeping faith and the promises of the Savior and 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 are not like other institutions of higher education, we have access to the gifts of the Spirit, which cannot be quantified.

That is why I am so confident that the work and glory was to lift others. He taught His disciples not to worry. 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 worked 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 was as I read the things that President Bednar said to this faculty during his period of time—knowing 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 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 am not sure where the Spartans got those characteristics, but I know why they are possessed by true disciples of Jesus Christ. Latter-day Saints 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 from this from that fragility borne of faith. There will come times when the Lord’s prophets will ask us to do more with less. Knowing
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 your examples—must play a major part. It is in 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 by study and by faith. It is their faith 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 follow and make solemnly—those graduates of BYU-Idaho will become legendary that will fill 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 Heavenly Father. It takes a focused eye. Listen. Alma, chapter 5, verse 15:

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 power to do whatsoever ye will, if ye are guided by the Spirit of God; it is deduced 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. Whether we learn by study and by faith or by both study and 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 the 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.
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 fragility 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 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 by 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 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 they see the existence of Brigham Young University-Idaho and for its Christ. That is the primary and most important reason for having a family 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; it is about creating an environment 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; it is about creating an environment in Rexburg, Idaho.

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. Let us now pay particular attention to this next characteristic:

• Most missionary training centers are located near a temple. As I considered these similarities, I was struck by the fact that Brigham Young University-Idaho in Rexburg possesses these same characteristics.

NOTES
1. 1 Corinthians 13:4.
3. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

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

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

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.” A disciple of Christ is one who is following and learning to be like Christ in every respect. If we are to be true disciples of the Savior and following His ways are the most demanding of our time,

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

In both the House of the Lord and in a temple of learning, a standard of worthiness must be met in order to enter and to be a student of the Lord. In the House of the Lord, a disciple must be one who loves the Lord and serves Him with all of his heart, might, mind, and strength.

What is it that makes this campus such a powerful disciple preparation center? 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 prepare our churches and our campuses for the future?” 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.”

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 prepare our churches and our campuses for the future?” 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 and prophets who have been released to serve in the Second Quorum of the Seventy. A significant number of those Brethren, after being released as General Authorities, have

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

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.*

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.

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 as 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 know 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:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the house of the Lord 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山 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.*

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 part of what is referred to in Isaiah—a part of the Lord’s house that has been established in the tops of the mountains whereon 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.

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 taught there. For a student who desires a temple recommendation and for a student who wishes to enter 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 Temple's teachings 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.

Factoring 1 among you. We shall have to build us a house in the land of Zion, like unto the pattern which I have given you.

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.

Verses 13–14: For a place of thanksgiving for all saints, and for a place of 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 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 supersession of their most sacred covenants.”

Becoming a true disciple of the Savior and following His ways are the most demanding of our time, and the coming to the House of the Lord is the greatest goal of the Disciples of Christ. I say that because...
served as temple presidents. As Sister Bednar and I host these addresses, 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 Wards 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 a 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 137:5–6.

Verily I say unto you. 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. BYU-Idaho is not just a university. You are not merely university students. Studying is not much more than taking tests and performing well in academic classes—though your academic development and performance truly are important. Those 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 is the cornerstone to living and through Him in the Father. 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. 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). 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.

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.

Faith does not come without works; faith does not come without obedience to the commandments of God.

Young people of your age can and will and do receive this superluminal 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 43:28 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 prophesy, 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.”

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.” Protected by “the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” and prepared with the “gospel of peace,” the Lord’s disciples will not fear. Precisely because such disciples are prepared, they shall not fear.”

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.”

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 the fullest the opportunities we have at this disciple preparation center to learn of Him, to learn from Him, and to follow Him. The supremal promise contained in section 19 of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 33, 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.”

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY-IDAHO | 19
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 Joe, 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; 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 we need in every part of every kind of organization in our society. We want our students to provide the kind of leadership that serves, and inspires—first and foremost in their families.
and in the Church, in their communities, and in their work. Listen to the words that Elder Eyring spoke four years ago about our students:

“They will be natural leaders who know how to teach and how to lead. 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.”

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.” President Harold B. Lee said this about learning by faith:

“It is in the ‘bending’ of the soul in righteous obedience; it is in the Spirit of the Lord, the calling up from the depths of one’s soul through worthy living to become attuned to the Holy Spirit, the calling up from the depths of one’s soul through worthy living to become attuned to the Holy Spirit.”

President Eyring described the Liahona:

“... And he raised up from the round ball of curious workmanship; and it was of fine brass. As my father arose in the morning, and went forth to the tent door, to his great astonishment he beheld upon the ground a ship of curious workmanship, and it was, when complete, ‘exceedingly fine.’”

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.”

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:

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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 change 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, loves 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.

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 Saints 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 this motel was 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 church 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.

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.

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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 president of Ricks College, I explained countless times that, rather than grow the institution, perhaps forever, a two-year-school. I told them traditional universities, the kind with graduate programs and competitive athletic programs, are terribly expensive. They seemed to never understand. They insisted that if we could only build it and 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 it demonstrates that human judgment could not have foreseen new designs for each and placed them together here.

God performed these miracles by revelation to his prophets, not through the people who advise them. I say that from personal experience 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 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 the one hundred places deserving temples. I delivered it to the President. Based on the criteria we used to make that list, of one hundred possibilities, a brilliant man working for the Presiding Bishopric would have recommended or even possible temple sites during the time I was acting as if you even think that the Church had purchased a future 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 keep it a secret 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 do I. And so do many of the members of the Church 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. These students—men and women teaching that service to others is a necessary part of inviting the Spirit. The university operates on the principle that everyone is both a teacher and a learner. The university is, like the temple, a place where success can come only if we help others succeed. Those who attend the temple to offer their departed ancestors proxy covenants do it gladly, knowing that they cannot be saved without those departed loved ones. The two places of learning are complementary—just as one. They both encourage all that would qualify for us to have eternal life. And they both require a high standard of personal worthiness for the companionship of the Spirit.

The temple, which rarely changes, and the university, which changes continuously. A dedicated temple is the only place where success can come only if we help others succeed. The university and the temple must differ because of their distinct purposes. The temple president is charged with seeing that the teaching and the ordinances in the temple do not change. The university president, on the other hand, is charged with continuous change which improves teaching and learning.

There are important reasons for this difference between the temple, which rarely changes, and the university, which changes continuously. A dedicated temple is the only place where the sealing power of the Priesthood is exercised. That power is eternal. Thus, the ordinances of the temple are the same across every nation and over time. Alterations, if any, are made only by the prophet, who holds the key to all change. And so, the temple functions as a kind of reunion.

In contrast to the temple president, 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 president of a university not need to tell us things that were true three years ago, three days ago, three weeks ago, or three months ago. The university president will find, with the help of the Spirit, better ways to teach and help students learn the new knowledge.

Falling to change in the university will lead to failure. But we will not fail. We will attract 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. Whatever they go, they will be more eager to help others, more determined to keep promises, more successful-- because God’s help 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 serve missions 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 and understood 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 the knowledge that she had known who her husband was and they would be together in the next world. And with all her own trials, she handed a cheerful present of Rexburg chocolates to my wife as we left.
Inaugural Response: Preserving the Pioneer’s Heart

President of Brigham Young University-Idaho
Brigham Young University-Idaho
September 15, 2015

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 pioneering heart, a spirit of sacrifice, and a spirit of service. 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 taught. Providentially, BYU-Idaho’s founding design included an emphasis on applied learning. Under President David A. Bednar, university-wide discovery in instructional strategy, measurement, and learning became a reality. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has declared, ‘Always remember Him.’ 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.

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 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, ‘Always remember Him.’ 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.

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.

What you are undertaking, [at BYU-Idaho] … is virtually unprecedented in the world of higher education. You are making your own inspired, pioneering journey.

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foundational addresses

BYU-Idaho as developing disciple leaders.

The Lord will reveal the pattern for this to happen, but the university must continue to prepare its heart in ways that will enable the 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.

Presidents Kim B. Clark and Henry B. Eyring

4. See Kim B. Clark, “Inaugural Response,” October 11, 2005, for discussion of the three imperatives: raising quality, lowering relative cost, serving more students.
5. See Henry B. Eyring, “A Steady, Upward Course,” BYU-Idaho Devotional, September 18, 2001, for discussion of rethinking education. Note: under the BYU-Idaho presidency of David A. Bednar the theme “rethinking education” was adopted.
8. David A. Bednar, “A Steady, Upward Course.”
10. See David A. Bednar, BYU-Idaho Faculty Meeting, August 2001, for discussion of associate degrees and the need for preserving a two-tiered institution at BYU-Idaho in inspired learning and teaching.
11. See Henry J. Eyring, Major Decisions (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), Part Two, for discussion of academic and career stewardship.
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 the 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 at 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 of attempting to bridge the campus and life away from home for the first time, with life’s distractions and difficulty and risk. The beginning is when they are living far away from home for the first time, with life’s distractions.”

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 capabilities 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 1986, 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 uncertain memory for names and his hundred-decibel “Hello!” of which I admired while serving as one of his trustees at Southern Utah University. Steve and Maryjane powerfully displayed 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 college. The Redmen, 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. Elder David A. and Sister Susan Bednar came to Ricks in 2004 to lead the university.

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 freshmen, followed by deeper 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 the end and the beginning in mind. For these students, the college experience is marked 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 form 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 yet, 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 back 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 allows for 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-stimulating internship programs from multiple majors before making a long-term commitment. Such 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 slowly expanding brown lake.

The bursting of the dam drained 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. 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 many: they found freedom from the emotional pressures 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.
Inaugural Charge to President Alvin F. Meredith III

Elder D. Todd Christofferson
Member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
Brigham Young University-Idaho
October 10, 2023

As Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Brigham Young University-Idaho Board of Trustees and by assignment from President Russell M. Nelson and the First Presidency, who chair that Board, I hereby install you, Alvin Frazier Meredith III, as President of Brigham Young University-Idaho, on this 10th day of October 2023.

In doing so, I confer upon you all the rights, responsibilities, authority, and prerogatives necessary to act as the university’s chief executive officer, institutional spokesman, and overseer of its assets.

I charge you to commit your time and talents in leading the university while preserving its unique culture and the Spirit of Ricks which is felt here. I charge you to exemplify the foundational modesty and frugality that are a hallmark of this institution, which cultivates the spirit of innovation and revelation.

In accomplishing this lofty expectation, I charge you with the responsibility to be the university’s chief moral and spiritual officer, this being the most important and most demanding of all your duties as president of the university.

I charge you to align Brigham Young University-Idaho with its prophetically inspired direction. The Board, with the Prophet at its head, will safeguard you through an increasingly challenging landscape and point the way to academic and spiritual success.

I charge you to preserve Brigham Young University-Idaho’s student-centered, teaching-focused culture. Help students develop the whole person, even the eternal person, both in and out of the classroom. Help students and employees to realize and magnify their divine identity as sons and daughters of God and as disciples of Jesus Christ who can lead in their families, the Church, and their communities.

Finally, I confer upon you all the blessings and spiritual gifts needed for you to fulfill your office and accomplish this sacred trust.

Elder Raaband, I invite you to stand with me beside President Meredith as we ask Jennifer to place the medallion of office upon him.

Jennifer, will you place the medallion on your husband, President Meredith, with this you are now formally inaugurated as the 18th president of Brigham Young University-Idaho. Congratulations.

We love you, we honor you, and we sustain you in this office. We look forward to serving with you. We would now invite your response to this charge.

Inaugural Response: From Birthright to the Steady, Upward Course

President Alvin F. Meredith III
President of Brigham Young University-Idaho
Brigham Young University-Idaho
October 10, 2023

INTRODUCTION

Elder Christofferson and Elder Raaband, thank you for your charge given to us today. We both appreciate and honor your leadership and guidance in the Church Educational System. Both Jennifer and I express our full alignment with the direction you have provided and give our full commitment to responding to the charge you have shared today.

PRESERVING THE BIRTHRIGHT

In June of 2000, President Gordon B. Hinckley announced the creation of BYU-Idaho with a charge to be a very different kind of university, a university with a distinctive, student-focused mission, with the primary purpose to develop deeply converted disciples of Jesus Christ. Save for that prophetic directive, BYU-Idaho would not be a four-year university.

In other words, President Hinckley’s announcement was our birthright and set the parameters and direction for the kind of university we would need to become. Our charge today is twofold: first, to preserve that birthright and everything it stands for; and, second, to continue on the steady, upward course that a prophet of God established for this university.

As we move forward, we must vigilantly preserve the timeless values and quest for discipleship that characterize BYU-Idaho. This is a unique place, and we must keep it that way.

CONTINUING ON THE STEADY, UPWARD COURSE

And we must also press forward and upward with joyful optimism, coupled with a spirit of divine discontent. Elder Neal A. Maxwell said that divine discontent comes when we compare “what we are [to] what we have the power to become.” What we are, and what has been done in the past, is nothing short of miraculous.

We all have sincere gratitude for those who have come before us, for the foundation they have laid, and the trajectory on which they have placed us. We are particularly grateful for the past presidents, both of Ricks College and BYU-Idaho. I have spent time listening to and learning from past presidents of BYU-Idaho: Henry B. Eyring, David A. Bednar, Kim B. Clark, Clark G. Gilbert, and Henry J. Eyring. The hope expressed by each of them is that we will continue on the steady, upward course. Henry J. Eyring, my immediate predecessor, led this university with honor and compassion. He was a guardian of the Spirit of Ricks. Thank you, President Eyring. President Eyring recently encouraged me to: “Take BYU-Idaho to higher places.” His words were an echo of his father, President Henry R. Eyring, who promised, “We can follow a steady, upward course in a world of change without fear, welcoming the opportunities.”

Today, I would like to share four ways I feel we can work together to preserve our sacred birthright and to continue on the steady, upward course that this university was set on with prophetic guidance.

REMAIN A CHRIST-CENTERED, PROPHETICALLY DIRECTED UNIVERSITY

First, we must, with great resolve and intentionality, remain a Christ-centered, prophetically directed university.

Our mission at BYU-Idaho, our primary purpose, our most important cause, is “to develop disciples of Jesus Christ who are leaders in their homes, the Church, and their communities.”

Elder David A. Bednar, referring to BYU-Idaho, said: “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.”

We must remain resolutely focused on that primary purpose. All that we do, especially hiring, must be done with the intent to “ensure an alignment with the university’s spiritual mission.”

We must lean into our mission and recognize that it not only makes us different, but is also a source of differential strength. Prophetic guidance is one of those “unparalleled spiritual resources” referred to by Elder Bednar. In Elder Raaband’s earlier remarks on BYU-Idaho’s governance and again in the charge from Elder Christofferson, it should be clear to all of us...
that prophets and apostles are active participants on the Board and the Executive Committee of BYU-Idaho. They set the direction and strategy for this university. They also have great love and concern for the rising generation. We must fortify our efforts to stay perfectly aligned with the teachings of living prophets to our students. We must be purposeful and diligent about maintaining doctrinal purity in every nook and corner of this university.

As we remain focused on Jesus Christ and aligned with prophetic direction, our graduates will go out into the workforce and world, as disciples of Christ. President Russell M. Nelson said: “True disciples of Jesus Christ are willing to stand out, speak up, and be different from the people of the world. They are undaunted, devoted, and courageous.” Those are characteristics of the natural leaders President Henry B. Eyring has talked about. He said this about BYU-Idaho graduates:

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.⁵

Our alumni are already fulfilling that prophesy today. We share the mission to develop disciple-leaders with our sister schools in the Church Educational System. We will continue to work as a committed contributor to this educational innovation.

CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN BYU-IDAHO’S CORE TEACHING MISSION THROUGH TEACHING-FOCUSED FACULTY

Continuing to strengthen BYU-Idaho’s core teaching mission through a teaching-focused faculty is the second way we preserve our birthright and continue on our steady, upward course. President Hinckley’s announcement included the following: “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.”¹⁰ That vision is as relevant now as it was then. It is also one of the defining characteristics of our students’ experience here and of this university.

Elder Gilbert said, “One of the hallmarks of BYU-Idaho is the personal investment of faculty who unapologetically build their professional focus on teaching and advising students.”¹¹ Our student-centered approach “requires a teaching-focused faculty free of the obligations of research that are so common at other universities.”¹²

Another important hallmark of BYU-Idaho is consecrated employees, staff, and administrators who also see themselves as teachers and mentors to students. Everyone at BYU-Idaho is a teacher.¹³

When I talk to alumni about their experience at BYU-Idaho, the common refrain I hear is, “BYU-Idaho was life-changing for me” followed immediately by something that sounds like: “Let me tell you about a professor I had, or, “Let me tell you about a supervisor I worked for,” or, “Let me share what I learned from the advice I served with in student leadership.”

We are immensely grateful for the faculty and other employees who have dedicated their time, talents, and experience toward teaching students. In these consecrated efforts, we must also continue to ensure that these individuals find joy and fulfillment in their work and service at BYU-Idaho.

PRESERVE BYU-IDAHO’S UNIQUE CULTURE AND THE SPIRIT OF RICKS

The third focus as we press forward is to preserve BYU-Idaho’s unique culture and the Spirit of Ricks. The culture and spirit of BYU-Idaho can be hard to define but are easy to feel. Many visitors walk this campus and express that they feel something different. It is not because of the buildings and facilities, which are impressive. It is not because of the grounds, which are beautifully manicured. And it is not even because of the people, who are famously friendly. It is because the Spirit of the Lord is here. And we must diligently preserve that.

Elder Bednar has repeated the following on this campus four different times: “If the day ever were to come that intellectual arrogance, a lack of appreciation, and a spirit of demanding entitlement [took] root on this campus—among the students, faculty, employees or the administration, or within the community—then in that day the Spirit of Ricks [would] be well on the way to being extinguished—and the heavenly influence and blessings that have prospered this institution and the people associated with it [would] be withdrawn.” He went on to say, and this is what I hope to emphasize, “Conversely, as long as intellectual modesty, humility, gratitude, obedience, and frugality continue to characterize those who learn and serve at BYU-Idaho, then this university [would] shine forth ever brighter as a beacon of righteousness and of inspired educational innovation.”¹⁴

TEACH AND AMPLIFY BYU-IDAHO’S MESSAGE

The fourth area is to teach and amplify BYU-Idaho’s message. We must tell our story in ways that ensure [that] students, parents, and Church members understand BYU-Idaho’s value and impact on the students and the Church.¹⁵ The intention of telling our story is not to seek praise or even to recruit.¹⁶ It is primarily to ensure that prospective students and employees are fully informed about the unique spiritual, educational, and professional opportunities found here at BYU-Idaho. We can do this in a modest, but clarion way that is in perfect alignment with the Spirit of Ricks. As we hold up our proverbial candles to shine, we can find ways to help more students learn in a student-centered university enveloped in the Spirit.

Our imperative, articulated by President Kim B. Clark, “to make a BYU-Idaho education available to many more of the young people of the Church”¹⁷ is more urgent now than it ever has been. We live in the times that Paul described as “perilous.”²⁰ He prophesied that people would be: “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”²¹ I believe that was, in part, why Elder Christofferson promised us prophetic guidance in his charge when he said: “The Board, with the Prophet at its head, will safeguard you through an increasingly challenging landscape, and point the way to academic and spiritual success.”²² At BYU-Idaho, we seek learning, but most importantly we seek for a “knowledge of the truth,”²³ eternal truth. And at BYU-Idaho, we have prophets to help guide us to those truths.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, BYU-Idaho is a unique and sacred, set apart place with a prophetically inspired heritage. By remaining Christ-centered and prophetically directed, continuing to strengthen our teaching focus, preserving the Spirit of Ricks, and amplifying our message and extending our reach, we will preserve our birthright and continue on the steady, upward course that the Lord established for this university. I pledge my deepest commitment to that effort. I witness that Jesus is the Christ and directs His Church and this university through a living prophet. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

5. See BYU-Idaho Mission Statement.
16. See Henry B. Eyring, “A Steady, Upward Course.” He said: “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.”
17. See Matthew 5:15–16.
19. 2 Timothy 3:1.
20. 2 Timothy 3:7.
22. 1 Timothy 2:4.
Inaugural Address: Legendary Graduates

Elder D. Todd Christofferson
Member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
Brigham Young University-Idaho
October 10, 2023

Thank you for that magnificent witness and prayer in music.

Elder and Sister Rasmussen, Elder and Sister Gilbert, President and Sister Meredith, students, faculty, administration and staff of Brigham Young University-Idaho, former presidents of the university and spouses, current presidents, and administrators of the CES institutions, and distinguished guests, welcome. Each of you honor us with your presence here today. I wish also to extend a personal welcome to President Meredith’s parents, Al and Mary Meredith, who are good friends of many years.

I appreciate President Meredith’s thoughtful and eloquent response to the charge given him as he assumes the reins of leadership at BYU-Idaho. I enthusiastically endorse what he has said and committed. This university is unique in so many positive and consequential ways, and it has been blessed with remarkable leaders throughout its history. I know several of them personally, including those here today, and I admire each one. Trip Meredith will continue that tradition and make a uniquely excellent contribution of his own.

I first set foot on this campus in February 1974. I had just turned 19 and was in my first year of law school as a state law clerk to Chief Judge John J. Sirica of the US District Court in Washington, DC. Kathy was with me, pregnant with our third child, Peter, who is now 49 years old, and who was released just last year after serving as a trial attorney in the defense of former Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

I was not the only one who could see him as president of this remarkable university. Besides his athletic abilities in those days, he was best known for his integrity and collegiality. He made friends easily because his peers respected and trusted him. They knew he was genuinely interested in them. But it was not just those in his own generation who felt that way. His family, his teachers, and his Church leaders all thought of him as having great promise in life and in any endeavor he might pursue. From his youth, he was committed to the Lord and the gospel path, and that commitment has only deepened in the intervening years.

The combination of President Meredith’s spiritual and intellectual talents has enabled him to serve as an effective leader in Church and business circles alike. His goodness, of course, extends to his marriage and family life. He was most definitely blessed to have found Jennifer; I’m sure the Lord had a hand in that. President Meredith is a better man, not only because of having Jennifer at his side, but because he listens to her. That is how you know he is wise.

I hate to admit this, but even with my feelings of admiration and respect for Trip Meredith—now Elder Alvin F. Meredith III—I was not the first to bring his name forward for consideration in the search for a new BYU-Idaho president. It’s not that I couldn’t imagine him in this role, rather it was that I was not the only one who could see him as president of this exceptional university. He has so many fans that somebody else beat me to the punch. Nevertheless, in the end, his talents and engaging personality are not why Elder Meredith was called to serve here at BYU-Idaho along with his wife, Jennifer. The Lord was in charge of their path to BYU-Idaho, and I testify to you, as a participant in the process, that it is the Lord who has put Elder Meredith where he is in this moment.

When he spoke remaining a Christ-centered, prophetically directed university, President Meredith quoted a statement from President Henry B. Eyring in his September 2002 address here, “A Steady, Upward Course.” Actually, it was not just a statement—President Eyring called it a prophecy about BYU-Idaho graduates:

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—that those graduates of BYU-Idaho will become legendary for their capacity to build the people around them and to add value wherever they serve.

Your new president naturally, reflexively seeks to add value in any assignment or undertaking. It is a hallmark of his, and I trust it will increasingly be, as President Eyring prophesied, a hallmark of the students that attend and graduate here.

Remember, your learning, your teaching, your prayers, your discipleship are not simply ends in themselves. What you are learning and gaining here should qualify you to add value in every setting—to bring important knowledge, innovation, and spiritual and academic skill to the table. And when I say, “bring to the table,” I include the family dinner table. The best way to have whatever value one is most critically invested in our marriages and our homes.

With this understanding, Brigham Young University-Idaho must never become a place or institution where a diploma is seen only as a kind of a talisman that can open the door to good fortune in the future. This is not the place for one who is simply a “credential seeker.” Education has value as a refining, ennobling influence in the life of any learner; but for us, it does not end there. It is not just about the learner, not just about the teacher; it is about enhancing our capacity to serve and bless others.

Years ago, President Marion G. Romney, then a member of the First Presidency, gave a landmark talk titled, “The Celestial Nature of Self-Reliance.” He quoted the Savior’s statement, “He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”

We lose our life by serving and lifting others. By so doing, we experience the only true and lasting happiness: Service is not something we endure on this earth so we can earn the right to live in the Celestial Kingdom. Service is the very fiber of which an exalted life in the Celestial Kingdom is made.

Can we see how critical self-reliance becomes when looked upon as the prerequisite to service, when we also know service is what Godhead is all about? Without self-reliance one cannot exercise these innate desires to serve. How can we give if there is nothing there? Food for the hungry cannot come from empty shelves. Money to assist the needy cannot come from an empty purse. Support and understanding cannot come from the empty heart. Teaching cannot come from the unlearned. And most important of all, spiritual guidance cannot come from the spiritually weak.

At this university, our efforts with respect to spiritual and intellectual enlargement, while worthy ends, are more importantly means and resources enabling us to lose our lives in the service of God and fellow men. President Russell M. Nelson has taught, “To the Christian, education and getting knowledge are a religious responsibility. We educate our minds so that one day we can render service of worth to somebody else.”

Your time at BYU-Idaho should enhance your capacity to advance the kingdom of God on the earth, to “lift up the hands which hang down and strengthen the feeble knees,” and to extend “charity, the pure love of Christ;” throughout civil society as well as the Church. It is a season to “lift your purses” and “stock your shelves” with resources you can draw upon to help meet future needs—your own and others—to store up emotional and spiritual strength and resilience that will sustain you in troubled times.

Please do not misunderstand. I am not suggesting that you should ignore the value of a BYU-Idaho diploma in opening doors of opportunity for you. If one of your goals is to obtain highly compensated employment, I hope you obtain it and assume you accept the council of President Eyring that if you expect your time here to be an important step in qualifying for the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2050, we’re with you! Yes, your degree is an important credential, but it is not the same thing as your identity or your potential. A major reason that a BYU-Idaho education is to focus you, by precept and example, on what is your identity and what is your purpose. When you are fully converted to those truths, you can strengthen your brothers and sisters. You can save your life by losing it in the Lord’s service. And at this university, you will have gained enhanced capacity to do so.

In short, as prophesied, “graduates of BYU-Idaho will become legendary for their capacity to build the people around them and to add value wherever they serve.”

May I repeat one additional statement President Meredith made in his response? He said, “Another important hallmark of BYU-Idaho is consecrated employees, staff, and administrators who also see themselves as teachers and mentors to students. Everyone at BYU-Idaho is a teacher.” I thrill to that statement—everyone is a teacher. With that in mind, I pay special tribute today to the outstanding faculty and employees of this university. You are wonderfully committed to your commission to teach and mentor. Your devotion, your skill, and your intellect are remarkable. You know how to teach, you know how to learn, and you know how to teach others to learn. As quoted earlier, the Savior asks us to lose our lives in His service and in the gospel cause, and that is precisely what you
do in the course of your teaching. I applaud you, my brothers and sisters, who have dedicated your professional lives to the success of “the rising generation.”

To you students, I say, I hope you will appreciate the choice your professors have made to put you first and their own professional recognition second. Your serious effort as a student is perhaps the best way you can express your gratitude.

My prayer for everyone associated with Brigham Young University–Idaho is that you may attain true and lasting conversion to Jesus Christ and His gospel. May He and His Heavenly Father—your Heavenly Father—be your first loyalty and their commandments your highest priority. May you model your life after the Master’s life. As President Nelson recently said, in all your decisions, “Think Celestial,” so that in eternity, you may live in God’s celestial kingdom, with a celestial resurrected body, and with those you love most.

My witness to you is that Jesus Christ is a living, resurrected, celestial being with all power to redeem anyone who will come unto Him in the way He has appointed.

I pray that God, our Heavenly Father, may magnify President Meredith and his administration in their service, grant us joy in teaching and learning together, and grant us power to stay the course. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

5. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.