

Citizenship, Research, Teaching: The BYU Way

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At BYU our primary and major focus has been and must be on our teaching and learning responsibilities. This is true with respect to both our academics and our spiritually strengthening activities. If we are asked to choose between the interests of our students and anything else, there is really no choice. We do research, serious inquiry, or creative work because it enhances the learning and teaching environment for our students. We do not look at these efforts to provide financial support for the university generally, although we do compete for grants and strive to have these activities be largely self-sustaining. Thus we see these efforts to create or identify new knowledge and to enhance scholarship on the part of the faculty as supportive of, rather than competing with, our involvements with students. . . .

We want to help students kindle curiosity and the fire of inquiry and to become “bilingual.”¹ And we would like to identify, define, and elaborate a desirable, possible, and practical role for inquiry, creativity, and research integral to learning and teaching at our primarily undergraduate teaching and learning university.

If you are tracking with me, you might at this juncture say, “We agree with all that has been said. How are we going to contribute to accomplishing what has been envisioned for BYU?” That is a great question, and a part of me wishes that I could give a clear, succinct, and insightful answer that would make further thought or discussion of the matter unnecessary. Happily, the other part of me realizes, as do most of you, that it is in the processes and activities of thinking, deliberating, discussing, testing, trying, changing, working, praying, and listening to each other and the Spirit that we make the heaven-intended progress that we must make. Learning “line upon line, precept upon precept”² is more than a catchy scriptural phrase. It is the process that each of us, and certainly this institution, must go through to reach our eternal goals.

Notes

1. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Second Century of Brigham Young University,” BYU devotional address, 10 October 1975.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 98:12.

This is an excerpt of a BYU university conference address delivered by Cecil O. Samuelson, president of Brigham Young University, on August 26, 2008.