

# *The Mission of Brigham Young University*

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The events of the past two weeks have caused me to reflect deeply on the responsibilities inherent in the presidency of this university. Four years ago I received a charge to be an especial witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. This charge weighs heavily on me and extends to my role as president. In every way I wish to enhance the academic quality of this institution while achieving a balance between the sacred and the secular. In no way do I intend to diminish its quality or reputation. It is my responsibility to be an example of the standards set for Brigham Young University by the board, by the doctrines of the kingdom, and by the Lord himself. I do understand to whom I am accountable. I believe in the divine destiny of Brigham Young University more now than ever before. At the same time, I have become more sensitive to your dreams and aspirations as I have interacted with many of you during the past eight months. If this university is to achieve its potential, the best of every faculty, staff, and administrative member is required.

## **Maintaining High Standards**

Before discussing with you the plans for the future, I wish to address the charges levied against me two weeks ago by one or more members of our academic community. The charge of plagiarism is serious in any context

but especially in an academic setting. The charge appeared in the media on the day of summer commencement. I learned about it one day earlier. Unfortunately, my schedule for three days did not provide time to address the problem adequately. In the time that elapsed, a number of concerns weighed heavily on me. May I share them with you.

The first concern was for Ms. Gertrude Himmelfarb, the person innocently drawn into the controversy. It was her intellectual property at the center of the accusation. Reference was not made to her work in the public address, but her article was cited in the printed version. Was the citation adequate? Once I had time to review the printed version of the speech plus Ms. Himmelfarb's article and realize that her work had been cited but an ambiguity existed, I spoke with Ms. Himmelfarb by telephone and sent her a letter containing an apology for the incident and an explanation.

The second concern was for the reputation of the university and its members. Had I been so careless as to quote from another person's

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*Merrill J. Bateman was president of Brigham Young University when this Annual University Conference address was given on 27 August 1996.*

work without due recognition? Even if inadvertent, that is not the standard I wish to live by or the operating standard at this institution. The standard of truthfulness required of all members of this community is of the highest level. Anything short of our best efforts in this regard is not acceptable. In particular, my performance must be exemplary.

With regard to this second concern, I reflected on the care one must take in referencing the work of others. All departments at the university stress the importance of academic integrity in preparing documents that draw on outside sources. Intellectual property is as real as real property. I know that. In the past I have meticulously tried to give credit where appropriate. My philosophy in preparing talks or articles has been that it is better to buttress one's own arguments with the well-reasoned position of a recognized authority. Consequently, I was shocked by the plagiarism charge.

The charge was made known to me Wednesday morning, August 14. At the time, I had only a few minutes to examine the material. The sentences from my address were displayed in a table. They were disjointed and appeared to be without attribution. The speech was four months old, and only faint shadows of its construction remained in my memory. As stated earlier, the absence of attribution was unusual because I know the rules and have tried carefully to follow them. In a public address it is sometimes cumbersome to note every attribution, but my printed versions have always included appropriate citations. Unfortunately, the schedule for the next three days left no time to examine my speech or Himmelfarb's article, given the responsibilities associated with commencement and other meetings.

On Saturday morning I examined the speech and its construction. As I read the address, I immediately realized what had happened. What had been presented in the accusatory

article as disjointed sentences without attribution were consecutive sentences in one paragraph plus the first part of a second. At the end of the first paragraph is an appropriate citation. What confused the accusatory author was that the citation directly followed a short phrase placed inside quotation marks. The quotation marks created the ambiguity as the critics assumed that the reference to Ms. Himmelfarb referred only to the short phrase when it referred to the preceding sentences in the paragraph. Two other sentences summarizing Himmelfarb's points begin a new paragraph one sentence later. Initially they were part of the sequence in the preceding paragraph with the appropriate citation. When a Dostoyevsky statement was inserted toward the end of the paragraph, these two sentences were put in the next paragraph. An op. cit. was inadvertently omitted. I am grateful that *The Chronicle of Higher Education* carefully reviewed the anonymous charge, saw the sequential sentences, and noted that a citation followed. Their comment on this matter is as follows:

*After paraphrasing Ms. Himmelfarb in six sentences, Mr. Bateman did cite Ms. Himmelfarb's article. He placed the citation after the last of the paraphrases, "The slogan is 'everything is political.'" Ms. Himmelfarb had written, " 'Everything is political,' the popular slogan has it." ["Brigham Young's President Accused of Plagiarism in Inaugural Speech," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, News Update for Friday, 16 August 1996, web site]*

The *Chronicle* published their comments on the web on Friday, August 16. I read their statement the following Monday, two days after the letter for Ms. Himmelfarb was prepared.

I apologize for the ambiguity and inattention that created the confusion. The attribution could and should have been clearer. I promise to be more careful in the future.

A third concern was and is for a few members of our community who feel the need to hide behind the cloak of anonymity. This is an open university, and I pledge to maintain that atmosphere. Reasonable men and women will differ in their views, but there are established procedures for resolving differences. Heads of departments, deans, and the administration have an open-door policy. The Faculty and Administrative Advisory Councils are additional forums for discussion. The administration has had brown bags with the faculty and staff in the past and will continue to do so. My door is always open, as many of you know.

The Savior also provided a formula for resolving differences. He said:

*Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*

*But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.*

[Matthew 18:15–16]

Within the university, anonymous letters regarding faculty or staff are ignored and returned to the person cited. Signed letters are given to the dean, department head, and appropriate faculty or staff for your information and discussion.

Five years ago the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve issued a statement counseling members not to participate in symposia where presentations injure the Church or are not appropriate (“Church Leaders Issue Statement Counseling Members,” Public Communications Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 23 August 1991). I believe the publication of an anonymous article by a symposia group denigrating members of the Twelve and advocating the transformation of BYU into a secular university supports the wisdom of that statement.

### **Balancing the Sacred and the Secular**

May I shift now to a topic that is at the core of this institution’s existence. Last December President Faust spoke to a small campus group and stated the following: “Brigham Young University is a continuing experiment in whether a university whose board of trustees comprises prophets, seers, and revelators can remain a first-class university and not become secularized.” The last eight months, but especially the last two weeks, have deepened my understanding of his expression. At the time he spoke, my thoughts were: “Of course the test will be successful! The sacred and the secular have coexisted on this campus for more than 120 years. The merging of the two parts will not only continue but will improve.” I now see the matter in a different light. The divine mission of BYU is always at risk. The experiment will succeed only as long as the vast majority of the BYU community believes in and is committed to the university’s divine mission. Most important, this includes faith in the leadership role of the board of trustees.

Fortunately, a very large majority of faculty, staff, and students (including nonmembers) are committed to the dual nature of this institution’s mission. They support the leadership of the Church. They understand that the use of sacred funds to support *secular learning only* would be a breach of trust. They also understand that the board wants the curriculum to be as wide and deep as decency allows but hopes the teacher sees the world through eyes of faith. The Brethren’s ultimate concern is not the range of topics but the knowledge gained by the student—both secular and sacred. Since the gospel embraces all truth, the breadth and depth of discussion are not at issue. The issue is the Spirit with which subjects are taught. In particular, doctrinally sensitive material must be taught with the aid of the Spirit and paradoxes should be noted. A mature faculty member will keep the students’ options open when discussing questions where the sacred

and secular appear to be in conflict. There are questions yet unanswered in the sacred realm as well as in the secular. The final test is if the teaching of the subject is both “intellectually enlarging” and “spiritually strengthening” (*The Mission of Brigham Young University and The Aims of a BYU Education* [Provo: BYU, 1995], p. 3). Since the gospel embraces all truth, I will paraphrase an idea from a recently published cartoon. We have “nothing to fear,” not even “fear itself” (“Opinion,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, Tuesday, 20 August 1996, p. A10).

In contrast, there are many in academia who believe that it is impossible for an institution of higher education to achieve excellence if tied to a religious organization. They point to the secularization of Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Vanderbilt, and others to fortify their claim. Their position is that policies and procedures established by a board of trustees should not influence faculty hiring, establish codes of behavior, or encourage expression consistent with church doctrine. According to this view, the faculty hiring process will not cast a wide enough net, faculty expression will be too narrow; i.e., truth will be excluded. As one analyzes this line of reasoning, policies and procedures are not at the heart of the debate. They are secondary. The defining argument is who establishes policy? Who determines the character and nature of the university? Ultimately, the answer depends on one’s faith.

If one believes in the restored gospel, that it contains important truths not found in the secular world, and that these truths are worthy of study, the case for a dual university can be made. If one believes in prophets, seers, and revelators as both the source of and stewards over sacred truth, then prophets have a legitimate role in defining the nature of any university they wish to establish and support. On the other hand, if one does not believe the restored gospel or Christianity or any other religion has significant truths worthy of study, or if one believes the presence and influence of prophets

and sacred truth in an academic setting inhibits the quality and quantity of secular truth transferred, one would opt for a secular institution.

I am grateful that accrediting agencies, although dominated by academics from secular institutions, still recognize the value of dual-natured universities and allow the sponsors to define the mission. The Commission on Colleges of the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (NWASC) carefully reviewed *The Mission of Brigham Young University and The Aims of a BYU Education* and our “Statement on Academic Freedom,” along with all other documents provided by the Self-Study Committee. Their final report stated:

*Quite simply, the University claims simultaneously both a spiritual and an intellectual mission, and the present evaluators discovered persistent, significant testimony that these two aspirations . . . are consciously lived on campus, and inform virtually every decision that is made from curricular structure to the nature of faculty hiring to the process for promotion in rank and advancement to continuing status. [“Evaluation Committee Report,” Commission on Colleges, Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, March 17–20, 1996, p. 6]*

The review committee not only recognized the causal connections between the dual nature of BYU and the hiring and promotion process, but they also confirmed its appropriateness and gave us high marks for our efforts.

The decision regarding the nature of BYU has been made and reconfirmed annually by prophets. The university has been extraordinarily successful in fulfilling its mission. The reason is you, the faculty and staff. Our tremendous student body also plays a vital role, as have all those who have gone before. You are men and women of faith who believe that the truths of the restored gospel are worthy of study and should be an integral part of the educational process. More than that, history

shows that you teach and operate under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Deep inside each of us is a conviction that the sacred can be blended with the secular with neither overcoming the other, because “truth embraceth truth; . . . light cleaveth unto light” (D&C 88:40).

### **BYU’s Future**

Now, what are the plans for the future? The plan for the next few years is largely based on the Self-Study Report. As all are aware, the BYU family spent more than two years in an extensive internal examination as part of the university’s strategic planning process and accreditation review. We are greatly indebted to the Self-Study Committee that operated under the capable direction of Professor James Kearl, with Vice President Alan Wilkins, Elder Bruce Hafen, and other administrative officers providing a university perspective. We are also very much aware that faculty and staff in every department contributed in a major way. The administration is extraordinarily grateful for the information, insights, and recommendations gleaned from the process. The accreditation review team was more than impressed. When Alan Wilkins and I made our final response to the Northwest Commission in June, numerous commission members expressed surprise and admiration regarding the size, complexity, and cooperative nature of the study effort. They had never seen a university review process as thorough and comprehensive. Members of the President’s Council, with the aid of others, have been able to compare our self-study process with those at other universities. Council members report that no other university of which they are aware listened to as many stakeholders, was as thorough in its analysis, or was as far-reaching in its conclusions.

During the past few months we have cataloged all self-study recommendations, together with responses from department chairs, deans, faculty, and staff. The vice presidents and their

councils have reviewed the documents and met with appropriate personnel to ensure a basic understanding. Finally, a full day was spent with deans and directors during which proposed priorities and recommendations were reviewed. An overview of the Self-Study Report was presented to the board of trustees in June. Recommendations will be presented to the board beginning in September. Because of the volume and complexity, it will take more than one board meeting to present the proposals adequately. As approval is received, we will visit each major unit to enlist your involvement and support in the implementation process.

The implementation phase is the most challenging part of the process. It needs to be deliberate and steady. It will take time. In those cases where programs are being modified or eliminated, it will take three or four years. Fortunately, we are not being asked to down-size, like some institutions. The self-study conclusions are concerned with relevancy and efficiency. The administration also believes that some areas mentioned in the report need additional emphasis.

### **Accreditation and Outcomes Assessment**

Before outlining key themes that will provide direction for the coming years, a comment on outcomes assessment is in order. One of the recommendations made by the visiting accreditation team is that more be done in the area of outcomes assessment. We must measure more adequately our performance and relate it to our institutional goals. As many know, the assessment recommendation is a common one in today’s academic world.

To address this important area, we have created a new Office of Planning and Assessment. The office mandate is to help departments and colleges develop tools that will assist in the measurement effort. We will rely heavily on the faculty and staff to assist in the design of appropriate instruments. All of us want to know more about our effectiveness in meeting

*The Aims of a BYU Education.* How can we measure our performance as faculty, staff, and administrators? How do the “Aims” apply to specific departments and colleges? What measurement tools are appropriate for the Physics and Astronomy Department? For the Bookstore? Can some measurement tools apply across the entire university? The major purpose for such assessment is to improve the quality of our teaching and research. As our ability to measure improves, the quality of our effort will improve as well.

### **Key Goals for the Future**

There are five major goals or themes that will guide our planning and actions during the next few years. The first is to *build on the religious foundation* already established. The second is to *improve the educational opportunity* of the students—both in quality and in the number served. With regard to quality, particular attention must be given to the freshman year. The third key strategy is to *strengthen teaching* while maintaining the upward momentum in research. The fourth goal is to *improve communication* between faculty, staff, and the administration. Finally, the last goal is to sharpen our *institutional focus*.

I will comment briefly on each goal, knowing that more will be said on one or more of these subjects by other members of the administration in their sessions of the annual conference. Moreover, discussions on these topics will engage us for some time to come.

### **Build on Our Religious Foundation**

The faculty/staff values survey conducted as part of the self-study revealed widespread agreement about the priority of a religious foundation. Strong feedback from the alumni survey pointed out the importance of the “spiritually strengthening” aspects of a BYU education. The questions are: “Can the sacred portion of the educational experience be improved? If so, how?” A faculty friend of

mine said to me a few months ago: “I was a faculty member at BYU for 10 years before I appreciated what the university is about. There is more to the university experience than my subject, and I had to learn how to be a part of it.” Addie Fuhriman in a recent devotional spoke to this same point. Referring to earlier devotional speakers, she said:

*We have been taken on a spiritual journey of integration, of coming to understand how one concept or principle relates to another . . . ; how each exceeds its individual potential through a relationship with the other; and, ultimately, how you and I are enriched, not just by one principle or the other but by their “relatedness.”* [Addie Fuhriman, “The Tie That Binds” (30 July 1996), *BYU 1995–96 Speeches* (Provo: BYU, 1996), p. 307]

With few exceptions, all of us come to BYU from superb graduate programs at secular institutions believing that our subject is the most important one at the university. The zeal for our subject is crucial if we are to succeed. Early in our careers we compartmentalize the search for secular truth versus the quest for spiritual understanding. The search process appears to be different. In the final analysis, however, successful scholars at this institution will learn to integrate sacred and secular principles—a process unknown and not taught at the best graduate schools.

We believe that an orientation program for new faculty may help. The Faculty Center will be asked to assist departments in this endeavor.

### **Improve Educational Opportunities**

There are both qualitative and quantitative aspects to the goal of improving educational opportunities. The data suggests that too many students become lost through lack of faculty contact and weak career advisement during the freshman year. We know that a significant percentage of the 100-level classes are taught by

teaching assistants. The percent of freshman-level classes taught by faculty with continuing status is low. When regular faculty teach freshmen, it is generally in very large sections that allow little individual interaction. It is also a fact that student attendance and performance are lower in large classes than in small ones, where more student/faculty interaction occurs.

To solve this problem, additional faculty resources are needed. Part of the funds obtained in the Lighting the Way capital campaign will be used for this purpose. Also, the self-study streamlining effort will free some faculty. Other proposals are being analyzed that may assist in improving the freshman class experience. For example, if discussions with faculty prove successful, professorships may be established to attract outstanding senior faculty to teach some of the 100-level courses.

The freshman class is our most vulnerable group. The quality of their educational experience is below that of the sophomore, junior, and senior years. We expect to solve this problem within a five-year period.

In discussing the quest for academic excellence at BYU, we are very much aware that research is an integral part of the scholarship equation. We view research as complementary to rather than competitive with good teaching. The goal will continue to be that every faculty member be engaged in productive research and renewal. Meaningful research has gathered momentum during the past two decades. This administration expects the research effort to not only continue but become even more productive in the future. The reward system will carry the appropriate weight for faculty research efforts.

I believe all of us agree that the major purpose of research at this university is to aid the teaching process, although we desire to contribute to the general store of knowledge. The university is primarily an undergraduate teaching institution—it is 90 percent of our mission. We recognize that the best scholarship

is a blend of outstanding research combined with strong communication skills. The ideal faculty member at BYU or at any other teaching university is the person who is blazing a trail along the research frontier and is effective in sharing basic principles as well as his or her advanced specialty with undergraduate students. There are two types of faculty members that are expensive at BYU. The first is a teacher who has not kept current with the basic discipline, and the second is a moderately productive researcher who cannot communicate with students. Consequently, the reward formula must also carry an appropriate weight for teaching skills.

There has been some speculation that the new administration may reduce the emphasis on research. This is not in the university's interests. The upward thrust must continue. It appears that average teaching loads will more than support this goal. We have some concerns, however, with regard to choices at the margin. In the past it appears that decisions have been made in which a moderately strong researcher with low teaching skills was preferred over a strong teacher with moderate research output. If a department has to choose between a strong researcher who is a poor teacher and a strong teacher who does moderate research, the latter should be selected, given the dominance of the undergraduate mission. For this reason, we believe that the decision and reward formulae should carry a higher weight for teaching in such cases.

May I briefly state the university's desire to bless more students. President Lee was committed to shortening the time to graduation so that more students could have the BYU experience. Some improvement in curriculum planning and student advisement has occurred already, although more can and will be done. In the future, many more students entering BYU will have taken Advanced Placement courses. This will shorten graduation time. Also, we believe it may be possible to more

fully utilize BYU's physical plant if certain bottlenecks are removed.

### **Strengthen Teaching**

Teaching and teacher education are critical national priorities. Both are integral parts of BYU's historical strengths. During the past few years, student interest in obtaining a teaching certificate has increased dramatically with almost 6,000 students now majoring in elementary or secondary education. University resources allocated to teacher education have not kept pace with the increased demand. Additional resources are needed in this area to service the students. We are also aware of two or three other colleges where shifts in demand have left them short. Resource reviews are underway in these areas as well.

The accreditation review team recommended formal faculty reviews of teaching, scholarship, and citizenship on a periodic basis following the granting of continuing status. With few exceptions, which can be corrected, most departments conduct thorough annual reviews that will allow the university to schedule formal reviews every six years. In this connection, the Office of Planning and Assessment will work with the departments to develop a peer review system that goes beyond student evaluations with respect to teaching.

### **Improve Communications**

The Self-Study Report pointed out the sluggish nature of the decision-making process at the university. Three steps are being taken to improve the process. The first is to streamline decision making by reducing the number of administrative layers through which a question must pass. The second is to clarify the roles of key personnel, push decision-making power to the lowest practical level, and limit the time taken to arrive at decisions for all nonboard items. Finally, the administration intends to spend more time with colleges, departments, and support units discussing concerns.

### **Sharpen Institutional Focus**

There are many suggestions in the self-study that, if adopted, will focus and simplify university offerings. They include structurally reorganizing some departments and colleges, consolidating a number of programs, and identifying key scholarship areas that should receive additional emphasis. Each of the above require board approval. To date, discussions have been held with the appropriate colleges and departments regarding the presentation that will be made to the board. Once board approval is received, implementation discussions will be held with the units concerned.

### **Campus Construction**

The last item is of major concern to everyone here. It is the campus construction and refurbishment program.

During the next academic year, BYU will be involved in seven major construction projects. These projects will include much-needed additional space for the university libraries, expanded family housing facilities for students, an upgrade of existing facilities, and the replacement of inefficient mechanical and electrical systems in these buildings.

I would like to discuss briefly each of these seven projects so that you can anticipate what will be happening during this next academic year. Some of the affected areas are the actual construction sites, and some are staging areas necessary for the contractor. Fences will enclose the entire construction area of each project.

The first site is Lot 16, directly north of the Jesse Knight Humanities Building and west of the Abraham O. Smoot Administration Building. This is an excavation project for the new sanitary and storm drainage system that is being redirected from the center of campus as a result of the library addition. This excavation project will begin next month.

The second major project is the underground addition to the Harold B. Lee Library. This project will add 234,000 square feet to the



existing library, including two floors underground and a partial third-floor mechanical room. A beautiful ground-level, glass-enclosed entryway will be located on the north side of the existing library. The project also includes a modest renovation of areas in the existing library as departments are relocated. Mechanical and electrical systems for the entire library will be upgraded. The construction fence will be installed this week. BYU will host a groundbreaking on September 20 and anticipates project completion by December 31, 1999. However, the hole in the middle of the quad will be covered after two years.

The third site, which is located directly east of the Harris Fine Arts Center, is the staging area for the Harold B. Lee Library construction project. Approximately 100 parking spaces will be removed from use and restored at the end of the library project, approximately by December 31, 1999.

Fourth is the J. Reuben Clark Law School Library addition and remodeling. The addition of 60,000 square feet will more than double the space available for books and study carrels. Computer systems are being improved, and the entire building has been upgraded for seismic purposes. The project is nearly complete and should be finished by November 1.

Fifth is the renovation of the Wilkinson Center. The project includes renovation of most areas in the building, the upgrade of mechanical and electrical systems, and the rearrangement of existing functions and businesses to serve patrons better. The project will add 90,000 square feet to the facility where the Memorial Lounge used to be. This new office space will allow a consolidation of student-related services now found in the Kimball Tower and the relocation of the Faculty Center. Student Employment and Career Placement Services in the Smoot Building also will move to the Wilkinson Center. Although the project will not be completed until the summer of 1998, some of the consolidation will occur in the summer

of 1997, when the new office space is available. You should know that the Cougarreat and cafeteria are currently being remodeled, although the Skyroom continues to serve meals. By the summer of 1997, a food court will be available to offer more commercial fast-food outlets in addition to the traditional cafeteria meals.

Next we have the renovation of the Eyring Science Center. The science building has been gutted of all interior walls and will be rebuilt to house the Geology, Physics and Astronomy, and Food Science and Nutrition Departments. This project is at the halfway point and should be completed by October 1997.

The last project is located directly west of Cougar Stadium. The Wyview family housing project will replace 150 trailers with 426 two- and three-bedroom apartments. The poultry facility formerly at that site has been relocated to Spanish Fork. The project will be completed in four phases. The last phase will be completed in August 1998.

### Conclusion

In closing, the board is grateful for the support of the faculty and staff. Your faithfulness and commitment to the university and the Church are deeply appreciated by President Hinckley and other board members. They know that the vast majority are totally committed to the divine mission of Brigham Young University. May all of us commit to follow the Savior's admonition to the Nephites when he said:

*For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.*

*Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away. [3 Nephi 11:29-30]*

If we work together in the spirit of the Savior's counsel, the future of this university is extraordinarily bright. The day will come when John Taylor's prophecy will be fulfilled: "Zion will be as far ahead of the outside world in everything pertaining to learning of every

kind as we are to-day in regard to religious matters" (*Journal of Discourses* 21:100). This will be accomplished with divine help for a faculty and staff worthy to receive such blessings. May God bless all of us to this end I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.