

# *Reaching the Heights Prophets Have Envisioned for Us*

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**F**or some reason, in spite of my fear and trembling about being in your presence with this responsibility, I have looked forward to the opportunity to address you for some time now. I have always felt, but now have a firm conviction, that this is the best faculty in the world. I feel your goodness and, even though I feel inadequate in my current appointment, I have felt sustained by the Spirit of the Lord and feel the evidence of the Lord's hand more than I ever have at BYU. I believe that this has something to do with our moment in history. It may also have something to do with my vantage point, where I have the opportunity to observe the dealings of the board of trustees with BYU and to watch the myriad little miracles of collegiality, of inspired teaching, of unselfish counseling of students, and of uplifting and thoughtful research. In addition, the opportunity to work with colleagues beyond my own department and college and to interview all candidates for faculty positions in the last three years has been enlightening and uplifting. I have felt a confirmation in many specific instances that the Lord has inspired and prepared you to be here and that you have divinely appointed missions to perform.

I have felt a conviction, born of the Spirit, that President Bateman has been called of

God by a prophet, by "pure revelation," as President Hinckley put it, to be in this new assignment. I have sat enthralled as Elder Eyring has come to meet with us on a regular basis and has taught us with brilliance and insight. I have felt the inspiration of the Lord directing me about whom to appoint as associate academic vice presidents, and I deeply appreciate the willingness of Cheryl Brown, Gary Hooper, Jim Gordon, and John Tanner to serve in these important ways the interests of the university as they sacrifice their own personal desires to teach and work in their areas of specialization.

Recently President Bateman and I had the opportunity to meet with the Commission on Colleges of the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges and discuss with them the visiting team's report. Many of them came up after our presentation spontaneously to congratulate us and to share their admiration for what the university has accomplished and is trying to do. For example, they marvel at the clarity of our mission and purpose and the degree to which people on campus share that

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mission. They were particularly impressed with the willingness of people across campus to collaborate, to sacrifice some rather good programs to achieve focus, and to work at developing greater excellence and service to students. They also noted the relatively unusual degree of stability that we enjoy at BYU because of the Church's financial support of our efforts.

I have also seen how you have responded in the self-study to very difficult and challenging requests for information and analysis from the Self-Study Committee and, subsequent to that time, from the administration. I have read your self-study reports and have admired the degree of self-sacrifice and effort that is demonstrated in these reports. I have watched the College of Education, for example, go through a very difficult but careful process of coming up with proposals for a true transformation of their college to better serve teachers who are preparing for assignments in public education. I have been inspired by faculty members who have been willing to put the interests of the students ahead of their own self-interest. The School of Management has gone through a similar process of deliberation to develop proposals for significant departmental and college reorganization to improve their ability to collaborate across departments and provide better service to students. Not all of the faculty in these two colleges have agreed with every proposal, but they have contributed their concerns and suggestions with goodwill and are now ready to move ahead and support the new programs if they are approved by the board of trustees.

These are but a few of the examples I could give of remarkable efforts to improve departments, colleges, and the whole university. I congratulate you for your thoughtful and energetic work over the past two years.

These remarkable efforts of our community demonstrate the kind of commitment that certainly would be present among some individuals on other campuses but, I am convinced,

could not be duplicated to this degree at any other university of this size. In short, I love and admire you and love being able to serve you and work with you to serve the Lord and the choice students he also has inspired to come here. I know that this institution is and will yet be a tool to bless and build the Lord's kingdom here on earth.

I remember thinking some two and a half years ago, as I began discussions with Jim Kearl and Bruce Hafen about the self-study, that beyond helping departments become more clear about their performance and role in the university, the most important thing we had to do was to work with the board to clarify the university's role in the expanding Church. Specifically, I had questions such as: How could we focus our research and teaching on areas that would be most important to the Church? and How could we expand our influence internationally? It is only recently, as a prophet asked us for proposals about how BYU could increase its ability to influence more students, that I've felt we have been able to bring together much of what has been sometimes frustrating work related to these concerns. I feel more optimistic than ever about BYU and our opportunities to be a part of the kingdom for a long time to come. These are things about which we cannot go into detail at this time. We will know more over the coming months as we and the board work together. If the board approves pursuing any of the ideas we are discussing, we will certainly inform and involve you in planning.

As I mentioned to you in a memo I wrote this summer reporting that we have been reaccredited, we have made a serious effort to respond to the stimulating and rigorous report of the Self-Study Committee. And, by the way, I express again my deep gratitude to the members of this committee who worked so tirelessly and thoughtfully on a very difficult task. As you recall, we invited your written responses to the committee's recommendations

and were gratified by the many thoughtful comments we received. We spent time with deans discussing general university recommendations. We also met with deans and department chairs in each college to share with them where we were leaning as an academic administration before we took our recommendations to the President's Council so that they could give us their feedback. Following the President's Council discussions, we met with deans and directors for a one-day meeting wherein we discussed in some detail our responses and the recommendations we would be taking to the board of trustees. As President Bateman noted yesterday, the recommendations are so voluminous that we will be taking them to the board in what we hope are manageable chunks over the next few months. As we reach board-approved conclusions, we will share the results with you in writing. We also plan to visit each college during the fall semester to discuss our plans, invite your suggestions about implementation, and allow you to address the questions that may be on your minds as we move forward.

Implementation of many of the self-study conclusions will take several years, and so we hope you will continue to be patient with the pace of our work together. Our intention is to continue in the spirit of candor and involvement that characterized the self-study. We will continue to follow the pattern of inviting relevant faculty groups to study and make recommendations that we will share and discuss. We will share with you data and deliberations regarding overall university direction. We also will seek the inspiration of heaven and clearly work under the direction of the board of trustees, who make the final decisions regarding policy, direction, and major programs at the university. Following such a process of involvement will necessarily take time, but I trust it will improve the quality of our recommendations and the sense you have of under-

standing and participating in the progress of the university.

### **Areas of Greatest Concern**

Recently I traveled with my wife and two of our daughters for a brief vacation in London, England. Riding the subway, the "Tube," as they call it, was an interesting part of the rich experience we enjoyed there, and we became fairly good at making our way around town using this marvelous vehicle. It took us a few rides before we understood the warning broadcast over loudspeakers for all to hear: "Mind the gap!" On many of the subway lines there is a gap between the lower platform and the floor of the subway car. Apparently, people can get a foot or leg lodged in the gap if they aren't careful. The warning became something of a slogan for us as we considered the differences or gaps between us and the British and between where we were and where we wanted to be. As I prepared to address you, I began to think about the gaps that have become more obvious during the self-study between our current situation as an institution and, as President Spencer W. Kimball put it, "the fully anointed University of the Lord" that we have been invited to become ("Second Century Address and Dedication of Carillon Tower and Bells," Brigham Young University, 10 October 1975, p. 8).

I want to focus on two broad areas where we have been concerned about such gaps between our aspirations and our current reality. Our aspirations have been eloquently presented in *The Aims of a BYU Education*, which all of you will have seen in various forms of development and in the final version that you all should have received in the mail recently along with *The Mission of Brigham Young University*. (If you have not received a copy, please drop me a note in campus mail or by e-mail, and I will send you one.) We seek to provide educational experiences that will foster spiritual strength, intellectual enlargement, the building of strong moral character, and lifelong learning

and service. As I consider our current situation, I worry that (1) we must focus more faculty attention on both our beginning students and our “ending” students to help both groups better prepare for their next steps; and (2) we must continue to build on and improve beyond our current relatively strong performance to foster teaching by the Spirit in every discipline and the integration of the sacred and the secular where appropriate. I want to suggest how these areas are gaps that we must mind, and reduce, if we are to be the university that prophets have invited us to become.

Our Student Experience Committee, chaired by David Sorenson and Cheryl Brown, found that the principal need for our students was for more contact with faculty. Data supporting this conclusion came from a nationally normed survey (the Pace Survey) that we have used over many years. In that survey we are somewhat lower than the national average in having students visit faculty in their office after class or in spending time informally with faculty over snacks or a soft drink. Consider some other findings: Although our rates of graduation have steadily increased over the last decade, we still have more than 45 percent of our students leave BYU before graduation. When we ask them about why they are leaving, their top academic reasons are (1) BYU is too impersonal, and (2) our classes are too large.

The perception that we are impersonal and have too many large classes bears further scrutiny. We have created large classes quite intentionally over the past years for a number of reasons. These classes have served us well in some instances and have certainly provided increased opportunity for faculty scholarship. However, we have discovered that there are some important drawbacks to these large classes as well. For example, they have a significantly lower attendance and a higher proportion of D’s, E’s, and UW’s than smaller classes ( $\leq 60$ ) at BYU, according to

research reviewed by the Student Experience Committee.

In addition to this concern with the size of classes, as President Bateman discussed yesterday, more than 55% of our 100-level classes are taught by student TA’s or part-time faculty. Although we acknowledge that many of our part-time faculty and TA’s are fine teachers and deserve our support, we believe our freshmen deserve an opportunity to interact with a seasoned full-time faculty member early in their experience here—one who knows them and can help them adjust to this university environment and one who is more likely to be around later as students have additional needs.

Interestingly, other data considered in the self-study suggested that while on average teaching loads have dropped from 9 credit hours to 6 credit hours per faculty per semester in the past two decades, we haven’t seen a commensurate increase in scholarly productivity. Furthermore, teaching loads are unevenly distributed, with the Humanities and Religious Instruction colleges being high (with loads of 9 and 10 credit hours per faculty member in some departments) and a number of departments in other colleges with average loads of 4 credit hours and sometimes even less per faculty member.

In addition to these concerns about the freshman year, data from our alumni survey suggest to us that students feel that faculty in many of our majors could be more helpful to them in helping them prepare for a career related to that major. That is why I said earlier that we may need to pay more attention to both beginning and ending students. Both need help to make transitions, either into or out of the university.

The net result of changes over the past decade or so, then, is that we have made moderate increases in our scholarship and have reduced the quality and personal attention that we give to our freshmen and those needing career counseling. The solution to this problem

is not straightforward in my mind. We need to have more full-time faculty teaching freshmen, at least some of the time, in smaller classes.

We also need to have faculty spend more time helping ending students consider their options and prepare for transitions into their careers.

But what will happen to our scholarly renewal and preparation if we invest more time in such efforts? We think we have found some ways to address these student concerns while continuing to honor our commitment to high quality research and creative work. But it won't be easy. To make matters even more difficult, we have a large proportion of our faculty retiring in the next few years, and the younger faculty who replace them will require some years with relatively lower teaching loads so that they can establish themselves in their disciplines. By the way, this is one reason that we may want to consider hiring faculty in a variety of career stages.

Nevertheless, we will continue to expect that all of our faculty engage in scholarly work principally because we assume that faculty who are alive in their discipline will be better teachers. That, by the way, is an assumption that the Balancing Teaching and Research Committee, chaired by Clayne Pope, suggested we should test. We also care deeply about continuing to foster the upward trend in our scholarly work because we have something to contribute to our disciplines. I see signs across the campus that we are developing the scholarly capacity and gospel maturity as a community that will allow us to contribute an LDS perspective to many disciplines and to give "reason of the hope that is in [us]" (1 Peter 3:15). Finally, we should be good scholars so that our reputation for quality will redound to the benefit of our students as they seek jobs and entrance into graduate schools.

We have determined to try several approaches to generate more faculty time to devote to our freshman students and to advising students, at the same time continuing to

encourage strong scholarly work. Let me list some of the ideas we are preparing to implement with your help.

1. We believe that we can generate between 25 and 30 new positions from the capital campaign over the next several years.

2. We believe that there are some courses that carry with fewer than 15 undergraduate students and 5–7 graduate students that we might work with you to eliminate.

3. As faculty retire, or leave for other reasons, we may reallocate the FTEs to areas of the university where loads are the heaviest.

4. We want to continue to work with you in providing leaner majors that, in the language of *The Aims of a BYU Education*, are "targeted at entrance-level, not expert-level, abilities" (p. 7) and that students are able to complete in about four years.

5. The Self-Study Committee concluded, based on their review, that we are trying to do too many things. We probably have some more program pruning to do that could free up additional faculty time.

6. We must continue to rely on some number of large classes. These classes, which touch the lives of so many students, must be the best large classes we can offer. We intend to use technology and media to enhance lectures and to foster greater interaction between faculty and students and between students and students. We have some excellent faculty who work very hard to provide wonderful large-class experiences already, and we will do all we can to facilitate and build on their efforts in what is a challenging teaching assignment.

Except for the first approach of bringing in additional faculty resources, the areas we have identified to tap additional faculty time will require difficult decisions about taking resources from one activity and investing them in another. We will need all of the goodwill we have seen from you thus far in the self-study and even better data for assessment and decision making than we have had heretofore. That

is one of the reasons we have accepted the Self-Study Committee recommendation to establish an Office of Planning and Budgeting. As you know, we have asked Ned Hill and Bob Webb to help us develop better assessment tools so that we can work with you to determine how well we are meeting our aims of strengthening students spiritually, enlarging them intellectually, building their character, and fostering in them an orientation to lifelong learning and service. Better information about our successes and failures in achieving these aims should guide us in making necessary improvements. It should also help us make better decisions about where to put new faculty positions and resources to address the highest priority needs or the biggest gaps that we see. We expect that through these means we will be able to better balance loads across departments, for example.

I want to share with you my conviction that all this effort isn't just an exercise in organizational efficiency. We do need to focus our efforts and become as efficient as we can be, but then we must give our hearts to being the servants and teachers that only we can be. I was touched yesterday by Elder Eyring's description of an enthusiastic freshman and his parents, all anticipating the beginning of a BYU education. I didn't think much about parents and their children and my responsibility to them when I began here as a professor. I was excited about my subject and wanted to make sure my students learned to be rigorous and thoughtful in my area, but I don't think I had a clear vision of what I could be in their lives. I discovered new dimensions to my responsibility as a professor on a number of occasions. Let me share one very simple example: Gene Dalton, a colleague of mine who is now retired, opened my eyes one time when he returned from a trip where he'd had dinner with some Church members living far from here whose daughter was attending BYU. He just happened to see on their refrigerator a big sign, "Remember Susan"—their BYU

daughter. He told me with tears in his eyes how it had affected him to think of Susan away from home, with loving parents remembering her and praying she would be taught, loved, helped, and provided with the best we can give her. She must not get lost in a bureaucracy that doesn't know her name and that processes her multiple-choice exams with a machine and that doesn't help her to ask her questions and discover how to answer them. Somehow we must find ways to be a part of Susan's life. We must have some effective small classes, some caring counselors, some willing faculty advisors—real people who have the time and resources to help her. The efforts to measure, to reallocate, and to hold each of us accountable may make it more likely that we can find and connect with Susan. In the end, however, we must determine, ourselves, to open our hearts and to see that the Lord is sending Susans and Johns and others of his children to be blessed and inspired and challenged by you and me. Well, that is the first area—better faculty contact with the students. This is one gap we face, and these are some ideas about how we might reduce and mind it.

### **Integrating the Sacred and the Secular**

A second area of concern, another gap if you will, relates to our most important and shared values and is something we have traditionally done well: that is, provide a unique educational experience that integrates the sacred and the secular. My concern is that if we are to reach the heights prophets have envisioned for us, we must be even better than we are currently. For example, we should pay attention when 34% of our alumni tell us that the integration of religious and academic viewpoints was either poor or fair in their major. I should note that alumni varied significantly in this assessment depending on their department, with some departments being rated much higher than others on this dimension. I'm also aware of a few departments that have been

engaged in very thoughtful reflection on what alumni were expecting that they missed and what that department might do differently to address those concerns.

I have heard some faculty suggest that the gospel isn't relevant to their teaching because there is no such thing as a Mormon law of gravity or mathematical formula or chemical solution. (By the way, I didn't hear these statements from those departments. I'm just using them as examples.) But didn't Brigham Young tell Karl G. Maeser "not to teach even the alphabet or the multiplication tables without the Spirit of God"? (See Alma P. Burton, *Karl G. Maeser: Mormon Educator* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1953], p. 26.) In 1967, Elder Spencer W. Kimball suggested that

*it would not be expected that all of the faculty should be categorically teaching religion constantly in their classes, but it is proper that every professor and teacher in this institution would keep his subject matter bathed in the light and color of the restored gospel, and have all his subject matter perfumed lightly with the spirit of the gospel. Always, there would be an essence and the student would feel the presence.*

*Every instructor should grasp the opportunity occasionally to bear formal testimony of the truth. . . . Certainly, a science instructor or a physical education teacher or a math or art teacher could find an opportunity sometimes to mention spiritual experiences or comment on the gospel truths. This would be in harmony with the spirit of Brigham Young's charge to Karl G. Maeser. ["Education for Eternity," Preschool Address to BYU Faculty and Staff, 12 September 1967, pp. 11–12]*

I have talked with numerous students who tell me that they have never heard a professor bear his or her testimony in class. Many have also told me that what most surprised them about coming to BYU is that their classes were not particularly different than classes they might have taken at another university.

They couldn't recall references to the gospel, to spiritual experience, to faith in or support of prophets. Thus, my own anecdotal evidence, in addition to some data from the alumni survey, suggests to me that we have some improving to do in this area.

My own experience as a faculty member and as one who interviewed all new faculty for almost three years suggests to me that most of us don't quite know what to do about Brigham Young's charge or President Kimball's suggestions. Most of us come to BYU precisely because we want to be in a place where we can talk freely about things sacred as they integrate with things secular. We simply haven't been taught or experienced thoughtful, appropriate ways of including the gospel and teaching with the Spirit in approaching our secular subjects.

Nevertheless, we must become much better at teaching with the Spirit. One of the principal reasons for teaching by the Spirit and bathing our subject "in the light and color of the gospel," it seems to me, is that this is the best way to encourage our students to consider their obligations regarding what they are learning. Nothing has a more powerful effect for good on us than hearing the gospel preached by the Spirit (see Alma 4:19 and 31:5). I think the same thing applies to secular subjects. Nothing will so help our students put our subjects in perspective and be motivated to use their learning to bless others, to reject error, to embrace truth, and to conform their lives to it than the presence of the Spirit of God and the linking of our work to the gospel.

Let me share with you a President McKay quote used in *The Aims of a BYU Education*:

*True education seeks to make men and women not only good mathematicians, proficient linguists, profound scientists, or brilliant literary lights, but also honest men [and women] with virtue, temperance, and brotherly love. [David O. McKay, "Why Education?" *Improvement Era*, vol. 70, no. 9 (September 1967), p. 3]*

The *Aims* brochure then goes on to say [pp. 10–11]:

*Consequently, a BYU education should bring together the intellectual integrity of fine academic discipline with the spiritual integrity of personal righteousness. The result is competence that reflects the highest professional and academic standards—strengthened and ennobled by Christlike attributes.*

*Thus understood, the development of character is so important that BYU “has no justification for its existence unless it builds character, creates and develops faith, and makes men and women of strength and courage, fortitude, and service—men and women who will become stalwarts in the Kingdom and bear witness of the . . . divinity of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not justified on an academic basis only” (Spencer W. Kimball, “On My Honor,” in *Speeches of the Year, 1978* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1979], p. 137). Rather, it fulfills its promise when “the morality of the graduates of this University provide[s] the music of hope for the inhabitants of this planet” (Kimball, “*Second Century Address and Dedication of Carillon Tower and Bells*,” *Brigham Young University*, 10 October 1975, p. 12).*

So how do we preserve and improve our delivery of this most precious gift to the youth of Zion who come here? We plan to foster a number of important initiatives designed to increase our learning and sharing of what we learn in this area. For example, following the recommendations of a faculty group chaired by Jim Gordon, we have decided to develop an intensive two-week new faculty seminar to be held in the spring or summer following a faculty member’s first year. We will focus on the profession of university teaching and how it relates to one’s scholarship, since most faculty learn how to do research or creative work in their PhD program (or terminal degree) and relatively few prepare themselves thoughtfully to be teachers. We will also focus considerable discussion and reading on what we know

about integrating the sacred and the secular and about teaching by the Spirit. We intend to present some of our finest faculty examples of this kind of teaching across a broad array of disciplines and approaches. We hope to develop questions, discussions, and readings that will be worth sharing even more broadly as well.

We have also asked our Faculty Center to work with a team of faculty members to produce this seminar, and we expect a pilot program this coming spring. Regarding the Faculty Center, permit me a brief aside: We are grateful to Don Jarvis, Bonner Ritchie, and their colleagues in the Faculty Center for the skillful way they have founded the faculty development efforts of the center. They have realized that faculty development is the work of faculty members themselves and of departments and deans, and they developed programs to facilitate our work in this regard. Don left in June to serve as mission president in the Russia Moscow Mission, and Bonner is taking a leave to the Middle East and will be stepping down in December of this year. We will announce the new director and associate director following our meeting with the board of trustees in the middle of September.

In addition to developing a new faculty seminar, we have asked the Faculty Center to help us provide settings and opportunities for us to reflect on and share our learning about teaching by the Spirit and about how to integrate the sacred and the secular. As I have also mentioned, we have asked the Planning and Budgeting Office to help you—as departments—design measures and means to report your progress and learning regarding achieving the aims of a BYU education and other important goals. Our conversations regarding efforts, outcomes, and learning should also help us to improve as a community in this most important area for BYU.

I also want to note that although there is a significant amount of agreement among us



regarding the goal of integrating the sacred and the secular, we have a diversity of perspectives about *how* to accomplish that end. Elder Bruce Hafen noted this difference last year as he commented on the same data from the survey of our institutional values conducted as part of the self-study. Some worry that we won't be orthodox enough as we discuss and apply the gospel; others think we will too quickly reject what one can learn from academic endeavor because it doesn't fit neatly into a gospel category. I believe we need both perspectives as we engage in discussions and learn from each other as well as from the Lord's Spirit. We have much good work to do together if we are to achieve the Lord's purposes for us, and we need the best thinking and faithful learning of which we are each capable.

This line of thinking suggests yet one other way in which we can continue to improve as a community where we seek to live and teach by the Spirit. I speak of the way we treat others whose views are different from our own. As I observe some of our conversations and listen to the stories we tell about one another, I sometimes worry that we forget Paul's lesson about the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12). Particularly in these sensitive times when issues about gender, ethnicity, and even academic paradigms like postmodernism and feminism present different perspectives, we must model for our students and for our colleagues throughout the academic world what it means to work together. The Physics and Astronomy Department should not say to the Elementary Education Department, "We have no need of thee." Male faculty on this campus should not think that we do not need female faculty, nor should female faculty think that the male faculty are all power-hungry chauvinists. We are all impoverished if we do not seek out and hire the best possible faculty regardless of their sex; if we do not listen thoughtfully and honestly to the perspectives of both genders; and if we do not make sure that our discus-

sions and decisions appropriately involve both men and women.

With respect to feminism, it seems to me that we can too readily embrace or reject ideas based on political or emotional or other motives. My hope is that we can learn to carefully examine such ideas in the light of the gospel and the teachings of modern-day prophets. It seems to me that we can learn a great deal about the reading and interpreting of texts and about alternative perspectives from feminism, for example. However, there are also forms of feminism that would reject priesthood power or revelation through male prophets, or would teach erroneous views about the nature of God and his Christ. BYU should be a place where both the insights and limitations of feminism, or of any other perspective, can be examined thoughtfully and faithfully. As John Tanner has said on many occasions, BYU should not be a feminist university nor a modern or a postmodern or a positivist university. It must be the Lord's university, free to seek truth and reject error in the light of our best thinking and the direction of prophets and the Spirit of God. Well, that's the second gap.

### **Strategic themes**

Since President Bateman discussed our five strategic themes with you yesterday and because we plan to discuss them in more detail with you in your colleges and/or in writing to you, I will merely point out the connections between the two general gaps I have been discussing and the themes we will pursue for the next several years. My intent today has been to give you some of the reasons behind the themes we have developed. You may note that, of the five themes, I have been talking principally about (1) building on religious foundations; (2) improving educational opportunity of students; and (5) sharpening institutional focus. We do need to sharpen our focus. We need to reduce, simplify, and clarify what we need to do well so that we can free up time to

improve the freshman year and serve as many students as possible. We must also continue to build on our religious foundations if we are to fulfill our reason for being. Improvement of teaching stems largely from our desire to follow President McKay's vision that if you can't get everyone into BYU, you should at least educate teachers who will then go into public schools and be a leaven to influence many more for good. We have drifted in recent years from our original roots in teacher education, and we want to make significant improvements in this area. The College of Education has responded with wonderful efforts, and we'll talk with you after we've shared them with the board. Our students have significant interest in teacher education with almost 20% of each recent graduating class certifying for public education.

We are also interested in responding to your strong feedback in the values survey, which indicated that you don't think that teaching is evaluated as carefully or rewarded as well as is research. We simply must address these concerns. We believe that good teaching is our most important task. We also believe that good teaching and good scholarship are closely related. We are therefore prepared to accept the recommendations of the Balancing Teaching and Research Committee to revise the teaching evaluation form to make it more adaptive to different teaching situations. We will also encourage more rigorous peer review of teaching to determine the competence and currency of a course, including the possibility of sending syllabi or teaching portfolios to external reviewers for assessment. We will also develop with deans and chairs a process for post-continuing status reviews every six years. Then, based on those reviews and evaluations, we will reward teaching excellence with rigor.

Finally, President Bateman discussed with you yesterday some ways we plan to respond to another of your concerns and ours from the self-study: that we improve our communica-

tion with each other and improve the speed of our decision making. I won't repeat what he said but will merely add that the annual stewardship reviews we plan to have with you and to begin this year will provide increased opportunity for us to come together with data and conversations that will increase the administration's understanding of your programs and efforts and will help us to work through concerns together.

These themes have as much to do with process as they do with content. That is, they suggest ways for us to move ahead to develop better institutional focus or to build more effectively on our religious foundations. We expect, for example, to learn a great deal about how to improve our service to students through developing measures of our aims and working with you to learn what is most helpful in achieving them.

#### **"In Process of Time"**

The thought of working through a process together brings me to a final set of observations regarding our destiny and my sense of unfolding and of becoming, my sense of optimism just now. Consider the promises concerning BYU's future implied in what President Bateman discussed yesterday: Remember, for example, John Taylor's prophecy that Zion would one day be "as far ahead of the outside world in everything pertaining to learning of every kind" (*Journal of Discourses* 21:100) as it was then in regard to religious matters. And think of President Kimball's vision of BYU becoming an "educational Everest" ("Second Century Address," p. 1), a refining host from which students would leave to accomplish great things to bless the world and strengthen the Church as well—students who would be greater than even Shakespeare or Handel because the Holy Ghost would work through their unique gifts and because their testimony and understanding of the Restoration along with the integrated sacred and secular instruc-

tion they would receive here would lift them to unimaginable heights (see “Education for Eternity,” pp. 12–19).

*BYU certainly must continue to be the greatest university, unique and different. . . . There should be an ever-widening gap between this school and all other schools. The reason is obvious. Our professors . . . should be peers or superiors to those at any other school in natural ability, extended training, plus the Holy Spirit which should bring them light and truth.* [“Education for Eternity,” p. 14]

What I have reviewed as I began this morning suggests that we are already beginning to accomplish some of these results, though not to the degree envisioned. How do we respond when we receive great promises but have a way to go before they can be accomplished? How do we respond, that is, to the gaps in our lives? My thoughts have turned to Abraham of late as I have felt more and more clear about what our focus for the next several years should be and have considered how we should approach questions like those I have just rehearsed.

Of course, Abraham faced significantly greater “incongruities,” as Larry Dahl calls them, than those we face (“The Abrahamic Test,” in Richard D. Draper, ed., *A Witness of Jesus Christ* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1990], p. 55). When the Lord promised Abraham that he would be the father of nations, he was 75 years old. He was 100 years old when Isaac was born to a 90-year-old Sarah! (See Genesis 12:4 and 21:5.) During this 25-year wait, Abraham asked the Lord for an explanation and even proposed that a child born in his house could be his heir. The Lord didn’t explain but merely reiterated the promise:

*Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. . . .*

*. . . This shall not be thine heir [referring to a child born to a servant in his house]; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.*

*And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.* [Genesis 15:1, 4–5]

Even though he didn’t understand, Abraham “believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6).

Abraham was also promised land, and when he and Lot went to possess it, it was filled with Amorites and others. When the shepherds of Abraham and Lot fought over pastureland, Abraham let Lot choose the part he wanted, and Lot picked the most fertile part of the promised land (see Genesis 13). So Abraham continued to wander as a “stranger” in his promised land, never possessing it in his lifetime (Genesis 17:8 and 23:4). Stephen says Abraham received “not so much [of the promised land] as to set his foot on” (Acts 7:5).

The Lord then asked Abraham to sacrifice his heir, Isaac (see Genesis 22). As Brother Dahl points out, human sacrifice would have been particularly repugnant to Abraham (see Dahl, in *A Witness of Jesus Christ*, p. 55). As a young man, Abraham had to be saved from being sacrificed by idol worshipers by an angel and was explicitly told to leave the land of his nativity because of these evil practices (see Abraham 1:15–16). How could God ask him to sacrifice the heir through whom God’s promises would be fulfilled? Paul says that Abraham believed “God was able to raise him [Isaac] up, even from the dead”—such was the depth and quality of Abraham’s faith (see Hebrews 11:19). Abraham presents us with a remarkable model of how to respond along the way when our prophesied goals and our current righteous path don’t seem compatible. “Learning by faith,” said President Harold B. Lee, “is no task

for a lazy man [or woman]. . . . Such [learning] requires the bending of the whole soul." Then only comes "knowledge by faith" (*Ye Are the Light of the World* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1974], p. 119). Certainly, Abraham bent his whole soul. He did his best to act on what the Lord asked of him. He sought explanation and proposed solutions and was faithful and believing when the Lord turned them down. He was willing to submit to the Lord's requests, and because of his humility and patience and faithful struggles, the Lord sanctified his soul (see Mosiah 3:19). When the promised blessings seemed distant and even imperiled—as those about BYU may sometimes seem to us—Abraham still persisted and believed, as must we.

Our struggles will sanctify us as well. They will make us worthy of the promised knowledge and blessings that will fulfill our destiny as a people and as a university. I have wondered at times how we could be part of the fulfillment of John Taylor's prophecy, given our emphasis on undergraduate teaching, because, even though we care deeply about scholarship, we have fewer PhD programs and larger numbers of students to care for than the elite research universities. President Bateman recently showed me a scripture in Doctrine and Covenants 121 that helps me understand how we might achieve our destiny:

*God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now; . . .*

*A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest. . . .*

*And also, if there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas, or to the dry land, or to the sun, moon, or stars—*

*. . . all . . . shall be revealed. [D&C 121:26, 28, 30–31]*

So we can merit the knowledge that can come only from the Holy Ghost if we live worthy of those blessings. I was intrigued by this promise and followed a penciled note in my scriptures to the *History of the Church*, wherein is recorded the rest of the letter from Joseph Smith from which was excerpted this passage in the Doctrine and Covenants. It gives us the conditions upon which that promise depends.

*The things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity—thou must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God, than the vain imaginations of the human heart! None but fools will trifle with the souls of men.*

*How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations—too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God, according to the purposes of His will, from before the foundation of the world! We are called to hold the keys of the mysteries of those things that have been kept hid from the foundation of the world until now. Some have tasted a little of these things, many of which are to be poured down from heaven upon the heads of babes; yea, upon the weak, obscure and despised ones of the earth. Therefore we beseech of you . . . that . . . we exhort one another to a reformation with one and all . . . ; let honesty, and sobriety, and candor, and solemnity, and virtue, and pureness, and meekness, and simplicity crown our heads in every place; and in fine, become as little children, without malice, guile or hypocrisy.*

*And now . . . , after your tribulations, if you do these things, and exercise fervent prayer and faith in the sight of God always, [He shall give unto you knowledge by His Holy Spirit, yea by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not*

*been revealed since the world was until now.] [HC 3:295–96]*

Here then are the conditions that we must follow if we are to receive the promised blessings of knowledge from the Holy Ghost.

We are called to become the fully anointed university of promise by prophets. It does not yet fully appear what we shall be or how we shall accomplish what God intends for us, but we can see the next steps, the gaps, and some of the stumbling blocks. We must overcome pride, humble ourselves, and truly be willing to submit to the Lord and his servants—as individuals and as a community. We must speak with candor and sobriety, without malice and guile. We will need to be patient with each other as we learn to stretch our minds “as high as the utmost heavens” to “commune with God” and to not “trifle with the souls of men” but to teach them by and with the Spirit of God.

President Harold B. Lee was my grandfather. One of his favorite hymns was “Lead, Kindly Light.” I remember how often he would say that he was, as Nephi of old, “led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which [he] should do” (1 Nephi 4:6).

I remember going to him as a young man, just finishing my senior year here at BYU, trying to decide what I would be when I grew up. I took to him my patriarchal blessing and asked him to read it and counsel me. I think in my heart of hearts, though I would not have admitted it at the time, I expected that his counsel would operate something like a crystal ball—that he would help me find my occupation or, even better, my wife, whom I still hadn’t found at that time.

He read the blessing and then paused for a minute and said, “Alan, I think you worry too much about the future.” This was not what I had come to hear. He went on to say, “Let me give you a thumbnail sketch of my life.” He said, in essence:

*I grew up as a boy in Clifton, Idaho. We prayed for the “pillars of the Church”—we meant the Brethren, the General Authorities. I could no more have dreamed of becoming one of them than of flying to the moon, which also seemed impossible in those days. And had I known that would happen, I might have been like Jonah, who ran from Nineveh when he received that assignment. And then I came back from a mission and thought I might be a farmer. But the farm was in real financial difficulty, and I had to go someplace else. I went to the University of Utah and got an education and met my wife. I didn’t know what I would be when I grew up, but I was lucky to get a job as a principal in an educational institution following graduation. A few years later there was another opening in a book-distribution company. And then a city commissioner died in midterm, and I was appointed to fill his term. I was called as a very young stake president, and half the members of my stake were out of work during the Great Depression. We had to struggle with how to provide welfare for them. Then I was called to start the welfare program for the whole Church. A few years later I was called as an apostle.*

At this time, as he was talking to me, he was a member of the First Presidency. He said, “Looking back, Alan, do you think I could have taken thought and planned any of those steps? Do you think it would have helped me to do so?”

“Minding the gap” does not mean spending too much time in the future. My grandfather would say to me, “Don’t live too far into the future. Live for today.” He would say, “Survey large fields and cultivate small ones. Do the good that is right before you.” “Live for today, and let the Spirit guide you to do the good you can today. Don’t live too far into the future.” These were his words to me. He knew that if we would get on the path of obedience and faith, it would lead to the right end, even if we couldn’t see which way it was going. It is only human to want to see how to close the gaps in

our lives as individuals or as groups. But the Lord often asks us to walk by faith.

President Kimball, as president of the Church, concluded his "Second Century Address" in 1975 with similar thoughts:

*It ought to be obvious to you, as it is to me, that some of the things the Lord would have occur in the second century of the BYU are hidden from our immediate view. Until we have climbed the hill just before us, we are not apt to be given a glimpse of what lies beyond. The hills ahead are higher than we think. This means that accomplishments and further*

*direction must occur in proper order, after we have done our part. We will not be transported from point A to point Z without having to pass through the developmental and demanding experiences of all the points of achievement and all the milestone markers the lie between! [pp. 9–10]*

That we may be willing to so conduct ourselves with patience and faith and consecration to merit the promised blessings and opportunities associated with BYU is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.