"Where There Is No Vision, the People Perish"

BRENT W. WEBB

I would like to begin my remarks today with a word about my predecessor, John Tanner. For the past six years I have admired John's love of learning, his loyalty to the university, his advocacy of faculty, and his principled approach to decision making. John mentioned early in his administration that his intent was to be an "academic" academic vice president. From my vantage point I found this to be absolutely true. The conclusion of John's service marks the end of a wonderful period of university administration in the academic vice president's office. Going forward there will be far fewer, if any, allusions to Milton and fewer quotes from Shakespeare. And, I regret to inform you, the regular installments of John's "Notes from an Amateur" have come to an end. I confess that I would often save John's "Notes from an Amateur" in my email inbox until I had time to savor them—finding them to be, sprinkled through the year, a bit of the same encouragement and inspiration he annually delivered to us in this setting. I thank John for his service and do so, I'm sure, on your behalf as well as I wish the Tanners well in their new assignment.

The theme for this annual university conference is the well-known verse from Proverbs: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). This seems to have renewed relevance at a time in the university's history when we are considering the hiring of a significant number of faculty and when the economic turmoil might easily rob us of aspiration and direction for the future. Vision is woven into so many dimensions of our theology. The cornerstone experience in the Restoration was the First Vision. In his account of that experience, the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote that after seeking heaven's direction in the Sacred Grove, and before the appearance of the Father and Son, he was surrounded by thick darkness—the antithesis of vision. So many of the ancient prophets were granted as part of their ministry a sacred glimpse—a vision—of the world, its history from beginning to end. Repeatedly the scriptures refer to the adversary's influence as quenching the light or overpowering us "unto blindness" (1 Nephi 15:24). Finally, the strength of the leadership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the membership's sustaining vote of them as "seers"—those with

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authority to see "things which are past, and . . . things which are to come" (Mosiah 8:17). Indeed, Mosiah told us that "a seer is greater than a prophet" (Mosiah 8:15). Vision is more than just an important and desirable characteristic of service. It is at the heart of governance and progress in the Lord's kingdom. Without it, we shrivel—or perish, in the words of our conference theme.

An episode from Church history provides both an example of such vision and, I believe, an important parallel for us at BYU. The building of the city Nauvoo by the Saints in the 1840s presented all of the challenges one might expect of a land claimed from the swamps of the Mississippi River, of poor immigrants arriving regularly in the city with few belongings and often very little in the way of preparation to make a living. Over time the city took shape, a temple was conceived, and some in the city began to experience a modest level of stability, prosperity, and comfort. Despite hardship, eventually life in Nauvoo allowed for public lectures, concerts, debates, and even the beginnings of a university.

During this eighteenth-century period, throughout established communities in America, women were organizing themselves in societies, often religious, with the aim of encouraging moral direction and sustaining those in need. Thousands of such circles were found in towns and cities in the more developed East of the young United States. Latter-day Saint women in Nauvoo were not unaffected by this movement, having either heard of such activities elsewhere or having themselves been involved before joining the Saints in Nauvoo. Wanting to provide charitable aid to the poor in the young city of Nauvoo and seeking to contribute in some way to the construction of the temple, a small group of sisters came together determined to organize themselves formally. They often met in the home of Sarah Granger Kimball. On March 4, 1842, the members of this group voted to draft a set of rules governing the group, and Eliza R. Snow was commissioned to write a constitution and bylaws. These documents were presented to the Prophet Joseph Smith for his approval. Sister Kimball reported that Joseph was impressed with their work, observing that the constitution and bylaws "were the best he had ever seen,"[1] but he said "they were not appropriate to the purposes of the Church as a whole."[2] Inviting the group of sisters to meet with him, Joseph promised that he would provide "something better for them than a written Constitution."[3] The group of twenty women gathered with the Prophet Joseph Smith, John Taylor, and Willard Richards in a second-story room of the prophet's red brick store on March 17, 1842. The result of that meeting was that the women would function beyond the other benevolent societies of the time—organized according to heaven's plan for them and guided by priesthood and prophetic vision. Eliza R. Snow declared "that the popular Institutions of the day should not be our guide [that] we should set an example for all the world, rather than confine ourselves to the course which had been heretofore pursued."[4] The initiative of those sisters and their seeking Joseph's prophetic charge was the genesis of what we recognize to be the Relief Society, which has become a powerful force in the Church and world with membership now exceeding six million.

The Lord's vision for the Relief Society was not *just* providing aid to the poor and downtrodden. The new organization would embrace all that was worthy and appropriate from its contemporary peers and would aspire to much more in building the kingdom under the prophetic vision of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Similarly, Brigham Young University's purpose is more than the rigorous and demanding instruction and faculty scholarship of fine universities elsewhere. According to our Aims, "a BYU education should be (1) spiritually strengthening, (2) intellectually enlarging, and

(3) character building, leading to (4) lifelong learning and service."[5] In October 1975, on BYU's 100th anniversary, President Spencer W. Kimball charted the course for BYU in its second century in a talk delivered to this campus. He declared:

Your light must have a special glow, for while you will do many things in the programs of this university that are done elsewhere, these same things can and must be done better here than others do them. You will also do some special things here that are left undone by other institutions.[6]

As was the case with the Relief Society, we at BYU are not to be, to borrow the words of Eliza R. Snow, "confine[d] to the course which [has] been heretofore pursued."

This unique vision and purpose of Brigham Young University was established from its conception. The architect of BYU, Karl G. Maeser, was prepared by the hand of heaven to give leadership to the beginnings of what we now see and enjoy here. Karl grew up in Germany and enjoyed the privileges of the best education Germany had to offer. With that preparation, at the young age of twenty, he began his professional life as a schoolteacher and was soon appointed to the prestigious position of headmaster of the Budig Institute in Dresden. His interest sparked by the reading of an anti-Mormon book, Maeser wrote to the Church's Scandinavian Mission for information. His letter was referred to leaders of the Swiss and German Mission, who thought it was a ruse to entice them to enter Germany, which was hostile to Mormonism at the time and where they would be jailed. Consequently, Brother Maeser's letter was ignored. Karl wrote again, and his second letter was forwarded to President Franklin D. Richards of the European Mission. A mission representative was sent to Dresden, and within two weeks the Maesers had embraced the gospel and sought baptism. Wary of the local police, the Maesers were baptized at midnight on October 14, 1855, in the Elbe River. Karl joined the Church knowing that because of the opposition to the Mormons in Germany at the time, he would have to sacrifice his standing and position in the community.

Soon he and his wife and two children fled Dresden for Zion under the dark of night. They arrived in London, where, before they could make arrangements for transatlantic passage, Maeser was called on a mission to Scotland. After completing this mission he sailed with his family to America. Just two days from their destination port of New York, one of their two children died aboard ship. Traveling to Philadelphia, Brother Maeser accepted a second mission call, this time to the Southern States, following which he was asked to lead a wagon company across the plains. Finally, five years after the Maeser family left Germany, they arrived in Zion. Once in Salt Lake City, Karl sought immediately to make a living as a teacher. He established the Deseret Lyceum in 1860, seeking to provide education to the children of the Latter-day Saints. Of the teaching environment Karl would later write that he "began teaching in the 15th Ward under conditions so primitive that teachers of today [1890s] can have no conception of them."[7] The Lyceum was not successful financially, and Maeser was forced to seek employment elsewhere. President Brigham Young appointed Karl head of the Union Academy in 1861. It was envisioned that the school would educate students beyond elementary grades from Salt Lake City and surrounding areas.

In 1867 Brother Maeser's name was called from the pulpit in the Tabernacle at general conference to serve in the Swiss and German Mission, and he left immediately thereafter. In 1869 he became president of the mission. After his return Maeser took up teaching again and was teaching in the Twentieth Ward schoolhouse when an explosion damaged the building. He went immediately to President

Brigham Young's office to seek help in repairing the building. President Young responded:

"I have another mission for you." . . .

"Yes," said the President, "we have been considering the establishment of a Church school, and are looking around for a man—the man to take charge of it. You are the man, Brother Maeser. We want you to go to Provo to organize and conduct an Academy to be established in the name of the Church."[8]

Returning the next day to President Young's office for direction in the establishment of the Academy, Brother Maeser was told, "You ought not to teach even the alphabet or the multiplication tables without the Spirit of God."[9]

Brigham Young's emphatic direction to Karl G. Maeser that the restored gospel was to be an integral part of the instruction at the new academy was not an idle one. The deed of trust drawn up by President Young in October 1875 conveyed to the Academy property comprising 1.2 acres and stipulated that in addition to the usual subjects, the "Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants shall be read and their doctrines inculcated in the Academy."[10]

After receiving President Young's assignment, Maeser moved his family to Provo—where the population at the time was 2,800—and set to work. His annual salary the first year of his appointment was $1,200—modest even in pioneer times for a man of his educational stature and position. The fledgling Academy grew and attracted students in increasing numbers but faced a continuous spate of problems that repeatedly left Brother Maeser wondering if the Academy could survive. By 1884, nine years after Maeser came to Provo, Brigham Young Academy hosted nearly 400 enrolled students and seemed on the verge of financial stability. However, on the night of January 27, 1884, the building occupied by the Academy was destroyed by fire. For the next eight years the Academy occupied several temporary buildings and teetered on the brink of financial collapse. Initially fiercely loyal, faculty grew discouraged as they went without pay and their families went hungry. The daunting challenges associated with the survival of the Academy took Karl to the brink of surrender. Brother Maeser wrote to the First Presidency:

I am ***worn out and sick in spirit,*** *. . . and with all my love for this Academy, I feel that I owe it to my very life, which is needlessly wearing itself out here in an apparently hopeless task, to accept any change that will promise me opportunities for permanent usefulness.*[11]

Brother Maeser told his wife and daughter that because he couldn't earn enough to provide for his family, he was going to accept a position at the University of Deseret, where he could get a regular salary. His wife and daughter packed their belongings and waited for several days until his daughter finally asked her father when they were moving.

His response in substance was, "I have changed my mind. I have had a dream—I have seen Temple Hill filled with buildings—great temples of learning, and I have decided to remain and do my part in contributing to the fulfillment of that dream."[12]

The Academy, nourished by this vision of its future granted to Karl G. Maeser, survived challenge after challenge to its existence and operation. Eventually construction of a new Academy building was undertaken, and on January 4, 1892, the new building was dedicated. That building, restored to its original splendor, is now the Provo City Library. But despite the new accommodations and steady progress in creating a fine educational program, a shortage of resources and mounting debt threatened the Academy. Construction on the Maeser Memorial Building—the cornerstone of which was laid in 1907—was idled for lack of funds. Finally it was concluded that the

only option for financing the completion of the building was to divide the land on Temple Hill into housing lots and sell them. Alfred Kelly, a Brigham Young Academy student, was tasked with presenting the idea of the sale of housing lots on Temple Hill in his commencement address. Feeling uneasy about the assignment, he climbed Temple Hill early one morning to pray and was granted what appears to have been the same vision of the Brigham Young University of the future that had come years earlier to Karl Maeser. Rather than propose the sale of the property, Kelly, just a student, shared his visionary experience with those in attendance at the graduation exercises. Benefactors rose to the rescue, pledging support for the Academy and the completion of the Maeser Memorial Building.[13]

The unrelenting problems faced by Brigham Young Academy make the recent hiring freeze seem like a walk in the park. Our challenges today are of a different nature, and we stand on the shoulders of those who struggled to build what we now enjoy. It was the vision of what Brigham Young University could and would be that guided our predecessors in challenges and moved the institution forward. It might interest you to know that the 1.2 acres deeded to launch Brigham Young Academy in 1875 have grown to the present-day 600-acre Brigham Young University campus with some 300 buildings comprising nearly 10 million square feet. These buildings are magnificently maintained on beautiful grounds adorned with landscaping that is the envy of universities elsewhere. Wouldn't Karl G. Maeser be stunned by the campus today—he having served seventeen years of his life in Brigham Young Academy mostly in borrowed and dilapidated facilities?

One more anecdote adds perspective to the progress we have made on this campus. In the last page of the BYU Library annual report for the academic year 1919 to 1920, the librarian accounted for the use of the $1,000 budget for new book acquisitions, then reported generally on the efficiency of the library operation. In a postscript to the document, the university librarian recounted the laborious drafting of thirty-two unique letters and a number of handwritten notes, then pleaded with then President George H. Brimhall: "Don't you think we need a typewriter?" It is an incredible journey from that plea for a special appropriation for the purchase of a typewriter in the library just ninety years ago to the 9,300 computers today on faculty and staff desks and in student labs across campus that are replaced on a regular and reliable schedule. We have much to be grateful for.

A look at BYU's past has a powerful effect, providing context and guiding our vision of BYU's future. The life-threatening challenges with facilities and financing are largely behind us, and we can focus with little distraction on fulfilling the destiny of the university. From its birth in 1875 to the BYU of 136 years later, this institution has been guided by prophetic vision implemented by determined faculty of faith and consecration. We are organized with a board of trustees made up of prophet-leaders who, at this particular time in BYU's history, not only have the vision of seers but who have extensive experience in the academic arena as well. Our board extends to us significant trust in setting our own curricular and scholarly directions at the university. In a BYU devotional address delivered in 1992, President Gordon B. Hinckley reaffirmed the more mature academic institution BYU had become since the charge of Brigham Young to Karl G. Maeser:

This is a world-class university, a great temple of learning where a highly qualified faculty instruct a large and eager body of students. These teachers impart with skill and dedication the accumulated secular knowledge of the centuries while also building faith in the eternal verities that are the foundation of civilization.

Such is our unqualified expectation.[14]

I note President Hinckley's use of the very words with which Karl G. Maeser described the BYU of the future in his dream: "great temples of learning." In his 1975 "second-century" address, President Spencer W. Kimball made a clear statement regarding the faculty role in achieving BYU's destiny when he declared:

Your double heritage and dual concerns with the secular and the spiritual require you to be "bilingual." As scholars you must speak with authority and excellence to your professional colleagues in the language of scholarship, and you must also be literate in the language of spiritual things. We must be more bilingual, in that sense, to fulfill our promise in the second century of BYU.[15]

How can we legitimately stretch our extraordinary students in their learning if we are not learners ourselves? How can we teach in our disciplines unless we can speak credibly in those disciplines and are helping to define them? How can we equip students—many of whom pursue further educational opportunities—to answer the questions of the day in a faithful way if we are not demonstrating the same? With good reason, there is no apology for our aspirations and the high standards to which we hold ourselves in our scholarly work. As faculty we must excel in both legs of the dual mission defined by President Kimball. If we are to be bilingual—equally conversant in our discipline and in our faith—then let us be *fluent,* even *native* speakers in both tongues.

President Kimball's vision of faculty influence on students has been the focus of investigation for the past several years in the Faculty Center. Alan Wilkins, Jane Birch, and Brent Melling have been exploring how we are doing in achieving our Aims of being, at the same time, spiritually strengthening and intellectually enlarging. Some faculty have wondered whether it is possible to teach in a way that both builds faith and stretches the intellect. Some have feared a dilution of academic rigor as they share their faith. Drawing on student ratings, the Faculty Center has recently examined the correlation between two variables for all university classes taught between fall 2006 and winter 2008. To gauge the effectiveness of our efforts to be spiritually strengthening, ratings from four student-rating items were averaged:

- Contributed to Aims
- Testimony strengthened
- Integrates gospel into subject
- Spiritually inspiring

As a measure of "intellectually enlarging," the student-survey item "I learned a great deal in this course" was used. The data showed a strong positive correlation between the student's perception of the amount learned in a course and its ability to spiritually strengthen.[16] It is readily acknowledged that this positive correlation does not confirm causality—that being spiritually inspiring *guarantees* increased intellectual learning, or vice versa. The positive correlation does indicate, however, that the two are not mutually exclusive and, further, that they may be mutually reinforcing.

As a follow-up to the analysis of student-ratings data, a survey instrument was sent by the Faculty Center to a random sample of 1,200 sophomores and juniors. The survey sought to investigate student attitudes toward the importance of these unique BYU educational Aims and, further, their perception of how the university meets them. In response to a question as to whether "every course at BYU should be both spiritually strengthening and intellectually enlarging," 90 percent of the students registered agreement at some level: "somewhat agree," "agree," or "strongly agree." Only 3 percent of students "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed."

When asked to assess the importance of courses being both spiritually strengthening

and intellectually enlarging, an astounding 90 percent of students indicated that creating a learning environment that integrates both of these dimensions of our Aims is either "somewhat important" or "very important." Asked to determine whether courses at BYU are meeting their expectations in this regard, nearly 60 percent of students expressed feeling that it is "very important" that courses be both spiritually strengthening and intellectually enlarging, but only 36 percent believed we are doing "very well" at meeting their expectations. The survey reveals emphatically that most students come to BYU courses expecting to find instruction that both strengthens faith and expands the intellect. For the most part we are successful, but it appears we might improve in meeting student expectations.

Student response to a survey question about the frequency of faculty combining the elements of spirituality and disciplinary content in the classroom is quite interesting. Student expectations on the frequency of faculty incorporating spiritual dimensions in the classroom showed a spectrum of responses, with most (86 percent) feeling that the two Aims should be combined in "some" or "most" class periods while 8 percent suggested that this should occur "every class period." The results suggest that most students are expecting that BYU courses involve both spiritual and intellectual content with considerable frequency. It is also the students' perception that this is achieved somewhat less often than they expect. Student comments solicited as part of the survey related to this question suggest, however, that they do not want faculty to artificially connect these Aims. In response to student-solicited comments, one student suggested, "I think that teachers and teaching assistants should take advantage of any opportunity they have to share gospel insights and/or connections when it fits in with secular subjects. But I do not feel like it is necessary or even effective if they go out of their way to make a stretched connection."[17]

Students were asked what their professors could do to encourage the combination of secular and spiritual learning in their courses. Suggestions for student consideration in responding to this survey question were drawn from interviews with forty-four professors from across campus whose student ratings revealed them to be in the top 25 percent of their colleges in both the amount learned and whether their courses were spiritually strengthening. These factors were rated by students on a 7-point scale—7 being "extremely important" and 1 being "extremely unimportant." The responses are shown below with the importance as determined by aggregate student responses shown numerically.

Showing they believe in their students' potential—6.51
Being authentic and genuine—6.47
Being an example and role model of someone who lives the gospel—6.44
Helping students prepare to deal with professional ethical issues that persons of faith might encounter—5.97
Mentioning gospel connections and insights where it flows naturally from the current class discussion or topic—5.95
Feeling and expressing concern and empathy for the students—5.89
Having rigorous intellectual standards—5.70
Taking on controversial subjects in their field with a gospel perspective—5.56
Sharing personal experiences of reconciling differences between their faith and intellect when faced with difficult issues—5.53
Being personal and sharing personal experiences—5.43
Praying in the classroom—5.42
Explicitly sharing their testimony on occasion—4.90
Being open to deviations from the lesson plan to address gospel topics or questions from the students—4.80

Continuing honest attempts at bringing in the gospel, even if awkward at times—4.74
Sharing spiritual thought, devotionals, scriptures, or hymns during class—4.34[18]

The student responses shown in the table reveal, interestingly, that what the highly rated faculty thought anecdotally might be considered as the most important to students are among the least important compared to other factors. While students strongly value the combination of spiritually strengthening and intellectually enlarging elements in their courses, there is a broad spectrum in the related course dimensions with which students resonate. Further, the students do not want to sacrifice intellectual standards for spiritual strength. "Having rigorous intellectual standards" was rated by students as "important"—of even greater importance than some more obvious elements of faithful instruction—and students indicate they are strengthened when faculty have high intellectual standards for them.

Student responses indicate that all of these elements of combining faith and intellect have some level of importance. However, it is revealing that the factors of greatest importance to students are "Showing they believe in students' potential," "Being authentic and genuine," and "Being a role model of living the gospel." Alan Wilkins and his team have concluded that what students generally find *most* helpful in integrating the spiritual with the intellectual are *characteristics* of professors rather than *techniques* or specific learning activities. Indeed, the students agree that the life and integrity of the professor are more important than what he or she says.

The Faculty Center's study reveals that students overwhelmingly expect the integration of faith and reason in their courses at BYU. This is undoubtedly part of what motivates them to come (another part certainly being the high concentration of Latter-day Saint young single adults). Of those select few who achieved admission to BYU this year, 78.6 percent enrolled in the university—among the highest yield rates of any university in the nation. These students appreciate that the directive given by President Brigham Young to Karl G. Maeser will be the norm: "You ought not to teach even the alphabet or the multiplication tables without the Spirit of God."

Given that the Faculty Center's study reveals that students value faculty showing that they believe in students' potential above all other factors, it might be helpful for me to introduce you to the entering freshman class who will populate our classrooms next week. Two-thirds of the more than 11,000 applicants were admitted this year. For those admitted, the average ACT score was 28.1, and the average high school GPA was 3.8—the highest ever for both metrics. Sixteen admits scored perfectly on the ACT exam, and one-third of the admitted class scored 30 or above. And 970 admitted freshmen (13 percent of them) had a perfect 4.0 high school GPA, with more than one in five freshmen having a GPA of 3.98 or above. Slightly more than one in nine students admitted were ranked academically number one in their high school graduating class, and one in six were ranked in the top five. In this freshman class, 96 percent were four-year seminary graduates—roughly one-half of those enrolled in early-morning seminary all four years; 4.3 percent graduated from a high school with a graduating class smaller than 100 students; and 19 percent of those admitted had a full load of Advanced Placement classes in high school while 14 percent had no AP enrollment. Three-fourths of those granted admission have three or more siblings. (One freshman reported having twenty-one siblings!) Roughly one in ten freshmen admitted is a first-generation college student in his or her family, and 9.1 percent have multicultural status.

We are sometimes prone (perhaps more particularly toward the end of the semester) to

view our students as lazy, ill-prepared, entitlement-generation students who excel primarily in whining. However, there can be no doubt that the potential these students are hoping we will see in them is there. It is our opportunity to help them learn academic independence and responsibility, to cultivate discipline and rigor, and to let our passion as learners infect the students. One of my colleagues on the President's Council, Kelly Flanagan, recently shared an experience he had early in his career. At a lunch gathering with colleagues in his department, Kelly, who had taught a particular class several times in succession, lamented, "I am so sick of teaching this class." One of those in the lunch group was a senior colleague whom Kelly admired and acknowledged to be a superb teacher and who had taken an interest in Kelly as a young faculty member. This experienced and wise mentor responded to Kelly's complaint: "This semester, why don't you try teaching the *students*." This retort by his respected colleague stung a bit, but, after reflection, Kelly changed his teaching approach, and both he and the students benefited for the rest of his career. His colleague's simple suggestion reflects a unique vision of students, each of whom has a different potential and learning style. We sometimes see our courses as a composite of syllabi, lectures, homework assignments, essays, quizzes, term papers, review sessions, midterms, and on and on. We might do well to remind ourselves of the obvious when we sometimes suffer from "faculty fatigue": that all we do centers on our students. We teach *people,* not courses, and we do it in the classroom, the hall, the lab, the studio, the library, the cafeteria, on the quad, and in our homes.

I want to say a word about technology in our teaching. Most of you have adopted technology as a mechanism for some portion of your educational delivery and student interaction. A few have not. I encourage you to use technology as it fits your style and to explore its use if you see it can benefit the students. Technology is *one* tool available to us for enhancing the learning of our students. The university has a long relationship with a particular course content management system called Blackboard, used across campus. Our studies reveal that 95 percent of you use Blackboard for distribution of course documents and information, 84 percent communicate with students via Blackboard's email tool, 77 percent use its grade-book utility, and 31 percent administer quizzes, along with other lesser-used elements of the product. Our studies have also shown that there is a need for learning technology tools that are more modular, more customizable by faculty, and more seamlessly connected to the major databases of the university. Existing commercial products don't have the level of integration we need, nor do they offer teachers and students the flexibility we have heard you desire to enhance learning.

Consequently, under a unique and successful partnership between the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Office of Information Technology, we have been developing our own set of tools tailored to the BYU faculty and environment. We call it the BYU Learning Suite. Two of the modules in the Learning Suite—Syllabus Builder and Digital Dialog—are available now. Other modules are in development for a release to faculty early in December of this year. In email communications over the past few months, I have apprised faculty of the availability of the BYU Learning Suite. I have also communicated our firm intention to transition away from Blackboard—a transition that is targeted for May of next year. I encourage faculty to consider using the modules currently available in their fall classes. While the two modules now available—Syllabus Builder and Digital Dialog—are *not* the standalone replacement for Blackboard, they constitute the first step in our move to the new system. Data you enter

in these tools will be carried forward to future semesters and to the additional BYU Learning Suite tools that come online later this semester. I recognize this will be a significant change, and transitioning to the new tools will require some additional up-front work on your part. However, I share the confidence and excitement of the developers that the BYU Learning Suite will yield significant benefit to you and to the students. At a recent national Campus Technology Conference in which the BYU Learning Suite was presented, a man from a prominent East Coast university approached the BYU contingent and said, "You are doing exactly what we tried to do at my university but were not able to accomplish. For me personally, your project [the Learning Suite] is the Holy Grail!"

May I now turn to important faculty matters. Over two and a half years ago, facing an economy on the slide, the board of trustees announced a hiring freeze at BYU and in other units of the Church. That freeze applied to both faculty and staff. Gratefully, the board made it clear that their vision of the fundamental nature of the university would not change, and there was no direction to reduce the number of faculty and students on campus. The entire campus shouldered up under the added strain during this difficult two-year period. You, the faculty, have taught additional sections and additional students. Some of that added effort surely came out of time you would have productively spent on other activities, and perhaps you sacrificed some time at home. We learned to use students in roles not previously designated as student positions. Some faculty who had imminent retirement plans as we entered the freeze postponed their retirement, and we hear anecdotally that they did so to ensure their departments were not short-handed.

Thank heaven we have students who are bright and trustworthy and faculty who are unselfish and committed. The board allowed us to propose exceptions to the hiring freeze in programs with critical needs—which we did sparingly. Although not without pain, the freeze has given units across campus the chance and a unique motivation to reconsider how programs function and how our faculty resources are positioned. We have heard the deans express that out of the discipline imposed by the freeze has come profitable reconsideration of our operations, our programs, our curriculum, and some needed change.

In January of this year the board announced a lifting of the hiring freeze. I hope the recent fluctuating economic winds won't call that suspension of the freeze into question. Over the past eight months departments across campus have filled staff positions previously vacant. Departments have begun to recruit faculty and invite them to campus for interviews. Activity in Craig Hart's office has picked up significantly. So far this year we have hired fifty continuing faculty status–track faculty—not quite the pre-freeze annual average of sixty-five permanent faculty hires the campus has seen since 1994. Fifty of our faculty colleagues have already retired this year—up from the average of past years. The net effect of all of this is that, campuswide, we currently have over 180 vacant CFS-track positions. This represents nominally one in eight permanent faculty positions currently unfilled! Unlike what we have seen at some fine universities across the nation, our board has affirmed its support for us returning to our full faculty complement. We have assured the board that we will do this in a measured and deliberate way, suggesting that it will take us three to five years to return to a steady state. This pool of faculty positions—perhaps our most valuable resource at the university—presents both an exciting opportunity and a sobering responsibility. We are so unlike other universities, in which mobile faculty move regularly from one university to the next. The average faculty tenure

at BYU is twenty-six years. Generally speaking, faculty come to BYU to stay.

It is sobering to think that we are now one-third of the way through the second century envisioned by President Kimball. We are now considering faculty candidates who, historical data suggests, will be at BYU through the middle of the twenty-first century and who will take our places in BYU labs and classrooms and as department chairs and deans. We need the vision, determination, and discrimination to hire faculty with extraordinary scholarly and teaching credentials who are also faithful and equally prepared and committed to our unique Aims. In many of our disciplines, gratefully, the pool of candidates qualified to do just that is deep. In others we have some work to do as we encourage gifted students to pursue graduate work and qualify to join our ranks. Let us seek faculty candidates who are not just credible in their disciplines but *incredible*. Let us seek candidates who are equipped to contribute with their scholarship in a way that shapes their disciplines, who will lead their fields, who are anxious to profess their scholarship in the finest scholarly venues, and who will invite students to be part of that endeavor. We project that finding such extraordinary faculty will take time. The deans are working with departments to assure that our hires meet this standard. With the excitement of new faculty hires, the fresh perspective and energy they bring, and the additional capacity in carrying the teaching load, we are all inclined to be impatient in making these hires. I hope you will agree with me that there are a number of reasons for hiring deliberately:

1. The recruiting, interviewing, and hiring process is itself demanding—consuming thought and time and obligating faculty and department administrators to considerable additional responsibility as this is done right. Interacting with candidates, recruiting them, hosting them on campus, and providing collegial follow-up takes effort. I have a dear friend and colleague at a university on the East Coast who served for a time as chair of his department. During one year of particularly intense hiring, he frequently hosted the candidates at dinner in the evening as part of their campus interviews. He lamented to me that he gained twenty pounds that year. Spreading the load of the hiring process over time seems prudent.

2. Let us be cautious in recruiting simultaneously for multiple vacant slots. In offering this caution I recognize that some departments on campus have a number of open faculty positions, and those vacancies have resulted in considerable added load to the department. I am sensitive to that, and I am only encouraging us to exercise the vision of our forebears—a vision of the long-term—as we develop and follow careful hiring strategies that we know will guide us decades into the future. Hiring more than one candidate at a time can sometimes result in the hire of a "*second*-best," no matter how excellent the candidate pool. No one wants to be second best. A phased approach in our recruiting efforts can impose the discipline to discriminate as we evaluate the candidates to identify the most qualified, the best trained, and the most committed to BYU's mission.

3. Faculty who join our ranks need training and mentoring as they adjust to faculty life and the university's expectations. This demands the time and attention of department administrators and colleagues. New faculty, often functioning independently for the first time, need to learn how to get their scholarship jump-started, how to manage time, how to develop the discipline to write, how to interact with students in the classroom and recruit and involve them in their research, and how to appropriately manage budgets. New faculty need to be taught how to involve themselves as colleagues in the department and the university, how to penetrate their academic associations, and how to navigate the administrative system at the university. Many of our new faculty have never taken full and ultimate

responsibility for teaching a course. Frequent encouragement and thoughtful feedback from colleagues—both critical and constructive—are needed to help these new faculty adjust. I believe we can do this better here. I have heard President Samuelson express his desire that we mentor new faculty more carefully, more energetically, and more formally. All of us have benefited from such mentoring relationships and would perhaps have enjoyed more. Encouragement to every department chair and every senior colleague to mentor new faculty—both formally and informally—seems particularly timely as we enter this period. Section 50 of the Doctrine and Covenants, while usually providing direction regarding teaching in the Church, may have real relevance to the mentoring of new faculty: "Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together" (D&C 50:22). Senior faculty are certainly not hesitant to preach, but we can all be reminded that both the mentored and the mentor are to be edified and should rejoice together.

4. Every new faculty hire triggers the need thereafter for careful annual stewardship evaluations, an initial CFS review three years later, and the final CFS review. These formative and summative evaluations must be done thoroughly, carefully, and according to our established policies and processes. Expectations must be clearly communicated early and oral and written feedback given frequently. Many departments have found that faculty committees provide effective feedback to assist the department chair in annual evaluations. I commend this practice to you campuswide. We do faculty no favors when we provide little or no feedback or when our feedback ignores critical areas in which improvement is needed. We can be simultaneously encouraging and candid. All of this evaluation work can be challenging for a department to do effectively if there are too many new faculty at once.

5. With new faculty hiring often come needs for equipment, laboratory or studio space, supplies, more modest citizenship responsibilities for a time, and other help in getting started. One element of this start-up help is the need for attentive, ongoing mentoring by the faculty colleagues I mentioned earlier. This start-up assistance in all its forms clearly has resource implications. While we are generously resourced at BYU, those resources are finite, and we wouldn't want to handicap our new hires because our resources were spread too thin. Phasing our new faculty hires positions us to address these new-faculty needs effectively.

6. Finally, hiring strategically requires work on the part of department faculty. Questions related to where the discipline is going, where the department is going, and where students are going all need to be carefully considered in guiding future hires. My experience is that this takes time and doesn't come without the hard labor of discussion and deliberation and evaluation of changing landscapes. Often there is a bit of tension among the faculty that needs resolution in this process. There seems to be little that generates more passion among faculty than hiring, with faculty CFS deliberations a close second. (I recognize here that campus parking is also a passion-generating element of faculty life.) This passion is wonderful, as it illustrates how strongly we feel about our work and how important a decision we see the recommendation of new faculty candidates to be. That passion ignites and sustains our work. However, all such hiring discussions must be cordial and civil, without the intrigue and backroom posturing that can occur in these processes. When a decision is made, sometimes without achieving unanimity in the department, I would hope we would move forward with unity to support the new hire and do all that is possible to assure his or her success. I have found myself in the situation in which *my* position was not the *majority* position in

a hiring deliberation. It was an emotional experience—one that caused me in that situation to question why everyone else just didn't "get it." I'm not too proud to admit that years later I've been pleased to have been proven wrong. Latter-day scripture again offers the pattern for such discussions: "Let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all" (D&C 88:122). Here, of all places, we should understand and embrace this divine principle in our hiring discussions. I might add, the same should be said of rank and status decisions, in which the same tendency for animated discussion prevails.

It is my hope, as we ease out of the hiring freeze, that we can identify faculty who will help us achieve our dual mission at the university more ably than do we who are already here. Intimidating as it may sound to us, and as unfair as it may sound to our junior colleagues, the only way for us to improve is for the next generation to be better than we are. I borrow a thought from a previous BYU president who expressed that it is "not failure but low aim [that] would be the most severe indictment of a Latter-day Saint fortunate enough to be at BYU."[19] This is certainly true for us as we chart the course for our future and nominate candidates for faculty positions at BYU. I have said in other settings that I would hope our faculty would be so distinguished in their disciplines that they would be regularly sought after by other fine universities, but my prayer would be that they couldn't bring themselves to leave.

I close with the words of an ancient hymn entitled "Be Thou My Vision," attributed to the Irish monk Dallán Forgaill from the sixth century. Historical writing from the period suggests that Forgaill, a scholar and teacher, studied so intensively that he lost his sight. Forgaill was beloved by his students, and legend has it that after his death his students dispersed, as they would accept no other master. I hope you'll find the words to the hymn as relevant and inspiring as I do.

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art.
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;
Thou and thou only, first in my heart,
Great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.

Great God of heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys,
O bright heav'n's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.[20]

We need such vision at this time in BYU's history. It is critical in all aspects of our university service—our teaching, our scholarship, our faith and consecration, our hiring, our mentoring of both students and faculty, our faculty evaluations and discussions, and so on. I am the product of a visionary and consecrated BYU faculty. As an undergraduate student here, I had faculty who saw potential in me I did not see. As my department recruited me twenty-five years ago, their interest in me gave me confidence. After my arrival on campus, I benefited from their treatment of me as a full colleague with encouragement and invitations to collaborate. May you have success this year in the full scope of your university service. I wish you success in your teaching and in all student interactions. I wish you success in your scholarly work. May a vision of the influence you may have in the lives of students and on your disciplines renew you as we begin this new year with enthusiasm and passion.

Notes

1. Sarah Kimball, "Auto-Biography," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 7 (1 September 1883): 51; quoted in Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, "The Turning of the Key, 1842–1844," *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 26.

2. Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant,* 26–27.

3. Sarah Kimball, "Auto-Biography," 51; quoted in *Women of Covenant,* 27.

4. Nauvoo Minutes, 17 March 1842; quoted in *Women of Covenant,* 27.

5. *The Mission of Brigham Young University* and *The Aims of a BYU Education* (Provo: BYU, 1996), 3.

6. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Second Century of Brigham Young University," BYU devotional, 10 October 1975; excerpted in "Climbing the Hills Just Ahead: Three Addresses" in John W. Welch and Don E. Norton, eds., *Educating Zion* (Provo: BYU Studies, 1996), 64.

7. Karl G. Maeser, *School and Fireside* (Salt Lake City: Skelton and Co., 1898), 355; quoted in *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years,* 4 vols., ed. Ernest L. Wilkinson and Leonard J. Arrington (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1975–76), 1:89.

8. Brigham Young, in Reinhard Maeser, *Karl G. Maeser: A Biography by His Son* (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1928), 77; quoted in *First One Hundred Years,* 1:79.

9. Brigham Young, in Reinhard Maeser, *Karl G. Maeser,* 79.

10. Minutes of the Brigham Young Academy Board of Trustees, 16 October 1875; quoted in *First One Hundred Years,* 1:65–66.

11. Karl G. Maeser to L. John Nuttall (secretary to the First Presidency), 4 May 1887; L. John Nuttall Papers; quoted in Ernest L. Wilkinson and W. Cleon Skousen, *Brigham Young University: A School of Destiny* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), 84; emphasis in original.

12. In *School of Destiny,* 85.

13. See B. F. Larsen, "Fifty Years Ago," speech given at a BYU alumni meeting, 25 May 1962, B. F. Larsen biographical file, BYU Archives, 4–5.

14. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Trust and Accountability," BYU devotional address, 13 October 1992.

15. Kimball, "Second Century."

16. See "Faculty Center BYU Aims Study: Survey of Sophomore and Juniors, Winter 2010," Alan Wilkins, Jane Birch, and Brent Melling and graduate students in Robert Ridge's psychology course http://bystudyandfaith.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/spiritually-strengthening-intellectually-enlarging-faculty.pdf

17. See "BYU Aims Study."

18. See "BYU Aims Study."

19. Jeffrey R. Holland, BYU annual university conference address, 22 August 1988.

20. "Be Thou My Vision," traditional Irish melody; English translation from ancient Irish, Mary E. Byrne, 1905; versed by Eleanor H. Hull, 1912.