

# *Our BYU Education*

CECIL O. SAMUELSON

I am grateful for the privilege of celebrating this long-awaited day not only with those of you graduating but also with your teachers, supervisors, parents, families, and friends. They, too, have experienced great anticipation for what this rite of passage signifies for those of you who have achieved the recognition identified in the program of the day. We all add our congratulations and best wishes, which we will appropriately repeat not only today and tomorrow but also on occasion throughout your lives. It is a great honor to participate with all who are involved and have contributed to the cause for this great celebration.

As is usually the case with the graduating class, there is not only diversity in background, disciplines studied, and future plans but also great consistency in the basic goodness and extraordinary capacity for accomplishment and service in those we honor. As I have the opportunity to reflect on the significant collective attainments of this wonderful group we honor today—and also on what you will yet achieve in your personal lives and in service to families, churches, communities, and nations—I find great evidence for con-

fidence in the future. I am satisfied that the tremendous investment made in your BYU education by you students, your families, the faithful members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and our loyal and generous donors is more than justified. In this we are reminded of the scriptural injunction familiar to all of us: “For of him [or her] unto whom much is given much is required” (D&C 82:3). In more casual discourse, we occasionally hear it said that “where much is given, much is expected.” While still true, the scriptural wording is stronger and clearer. Inherent in all that we do at BYU is the expectation and even the mandate that the efforts of students, professors, family members, friends, tithe payers, and thoughtful donors will all bear productive and valuable fruit.

Hopefully we are clear that the confidence and blessings bestowed upon us as the result of our BYU experience raises much more than a suggestion that we will “go forth to serve”

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*Cecil O. Samuelson was president of Brigham Young University when this commencement address was given on 19 April 2012.*

with commitment, effectiveness, and appreciation. While I have not visited with all of you by any means, I am satisfied by my interactions with many that you both understand and are fully committed to contribute a high return on the investment made in each of you. Thank you for your goodness, your devotion, and your determination to fulfill your great potential in making the world a better place. I am very pleased to recognize and endorse to Elder Dallin H. Oaks and his associates on our board of trustees your present and future contributions.

In accord with the prophecies made about this institution by our Church leaders from the very beginning of our institution, Brigham Young University is progressing toward the goal of becoming the very fine university prophetic predictions have envisioned. While still needing to do many more things better than we do them today, we are now consistently in the top ten in this nation of all baccalaureate degree-granting institutions in producing graduates who go on to earn PhD degrees as well as professional degrees in dentistry, law, and medicine in addition to other fields. Our students and faculty continue to be widely recognized and saluted for their integrity and accomplishments.

But there are also some very important things about BYU that have not changed and must never change. In the remarkable history of our first one hundred years by Wilkinson and Skousen entitled *Brigham Young University: A School of Destiny*, I read the following statement:

*Certainly one of the most distinguishing features of Brigham Young Academy was the attention it gave to teaching, as part of the daily curriculum, the doctrines, practices, and principles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The original*

*1875 deed of trust provided that "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." The deed and grant of property of 1 June 1877 also provided that "no book shall be used therein that misrepresents, or speaks lightly of the Divine Mission of our Savior, or of the Prophet Joseph Smith, or in any manner advances ideas antagonistic to the principles of the Gospel." These instructions were strictly followed. [Ernest L. Wilkinson and W. Cleon Skousen, *Brigham Young University: A School of Destiny* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), 106]*

And, I add, they continue to be.

This coming week we will be visited on campus by an accrediting team from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. As a campus community and in our preparation for our report and this visit, we have spent considerable time and effort studying the BYU Aims and Mission statements. While eloquent and possessing more detail than that found in the statement I just read, the fundamentals and basics have not changed. From the very beginning BYU has been an institution that has done its best to "be (1) spiritually strengthening, (2) intellectually enlarging, (3) character building, leading to (4) lifelong learning and service" (*The Mission of Brigham Young University and The Aims of a BYU Education* [Provo: BYU, 1996], 3).

It is our prayer and aspiration for each of you as you complete this BYU experience that you will continually keep the mission and aims of your BYU education front and center in your minds and in your hearts so that they are inextricably connected with who and what you are. May this ever be so for each of us, I humbly pray and testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.