

## *Now and the Future*

CECIL O. SAMUELSON

As is usual at this great season of the university calendar, I share your excitement and enthusiasm for the start of another academic year filled with anticipation and expectation that the best is yet to come. I admit, as might some of you, a little regret at how quickly summers seem to slip away as we get a little older. Still, the changing of the seasons and the opportunities for new beginnings create for us feelings of exhilaration likely unmatched in other careers and occupations. What a wonderful thing it is to be involved in the life of a university, and what a signal privilege it is when it happens to be at Brigham Young University!

The theme for this year's annual university conference is taken from Proverbs 29:18: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." We want no one to perish, and particularly are we concerned with you, our students, and our entire community. Although some of us are developing cataracts and others struggle with nearsightedness, farsightedness, astigmatism, and other ocular limitations, I hope through the light of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and the guidance we receive from our dedicated board of trustees that our very talented and committed BYU community does see clearly the things we are asked and aspire

to do. My thanks to all of you and our many other associates in the grand enterprise of Brigham Young University.

As is my custom on this occasion each year, I will report briefly on some of the developments on campus. I hope you all had the opportunity to see the Bloch exhibition at the BYU Museum of Art last winter and spring. In many respects it was one of the finest things BYU has ever done. While serving in Europe, now some years ago, I had the opportunity to see many of the sacred paintings in Denmark that bear such vivid testimony of the Savior and His mission. When the idea was initially raised to bring these paintings to BYU, I didn't think this exhibition would be possible. Thanks to the vision of our own people and the generosity of important donors, thousands visited the museum and found great inspiration and enjoyment. You are always welcome at the Museum of Art and at our other museums as well. Their exhibitions and displays will not disappoint you. Likewise, we have had—and

---

*Cecil O. Samuelson was president of Brigham Young University when this address was given at the BYU annual university conference on 23 August 2011.*

will have again this year—many wonderful cultural events of great variety.

We have heard some remarkably outstanding devotional and forum messages recently. Through the David M. Kennedy Center, the Wheatley Institution, and our various colleges and other organizations, distinguished and renowned speakers and presentations have blessed not only our students and the university family but the greater outside community as well. We plan to continue in this tradition this year and invite you to refer regularly to the BYU website, the *Daily Universe*, and our other publications for these announcements. Outstanding people increasingly want to come to BYU, and we are grateful to have them with us.

It has been a good year in athletics. In addition to the many wins and championships that we have come to take for granted, we have been witnesses to a nickname, “Jimmer,” that has become not only extremely well known but also commonly used as various parts of speech. It seems that almost everyone understands the multiple interpretations of what “being Jimmered” means. During last April’s commencement exercises here at the Marriott Center, my wife, Sharon, heard one of the graduating coeds marvel to a friend that they were actually walking on the same floor where Jimmer had played basketball! I would welcome you all to do the same, if you are so inclined, but not until after I finish speaking, if you please.

In spite of the tenuous economy for the last few years, we have had considerable activity on the construction front. Just a week and a half ago, President Henry B. Eyring was on campus to dedicate the new BYU Broadcasting Building and the Information Technology Building. He was accompanied by Elders Nelson, Oaks, and Ballard of the Twelve, who serve on the board of trustees. We also were blessed to have many donors and special contributors and friends with us as well.

Both of these impressive new facilities reflect the changing times in which we live, and, with the encouragement and support of our board of trustees, we are determined to do what we can and must to take advantage of new technology and developments. Doing so will allow us to continue to progress on campus as well as take our message and that of the Church to the world in unprecedented ways. Many have contributed in various ways to these facilities and initiatives, and they deserve recognition and our profound thanks.

It is impossible to miss the impressive and large student housing project that is emerging on the site of the former Deseret Towers and that will eventually replace the aging Heritage Halls as well. The first two buildings will be occupied during this upcoming academic year, with two more to follow shortly. The board has also approved moving forward with phase two of the project in the months and years ahead, to be followed with additional phases as our resources and capacity allow.

I suspect you understand that these housing projects, as with others in the past, are financed by generous long-term loans at very favorable interest rates provided by the Church. This allows us to keep rents at levels as low as possible and yet be able to repay the debt incurred. As I have stated in the past, our studies show that students, particularly freshmen, living on campus do better scholastically and report a more fulfilling educational experience when they live in campus housing.

In addition to the regular maintenance and refurbishing going on across this large and complicated campus, you will see, and sometimes hear and feel, other construction projects that are related to the continued building of utility tunnels. In years past, our water, power, heating, and cooling utilities were buried in trenches. While perhaps less expensive initially, we have learned that as the campus ages, these systems fail and are often very expensive and difficult to manage. Eventually,

all these delivery systems will be located in utility tunnels that will allow not only regular inspection and maintenance but will also lessen the emergencies, costs, and interruptions that can be so disruptive and expensive to repair otherwise.

I have mentioned in the past our plans to move forward in building a new Life Sciences Building. Soon we will present to the board of trustees the report of the planning work that has been done, together with cost estimates and other details for their consideration and, hopefully, their final approval to begin construction. The board recently has also approved the expansion of the Bean Museum, which is made possible because of generous contributions. Other improvements and projects are in various stages of consideration, planning, and implementation.

With great delight, we learned late last year that the hiring freeze, which had been in place for two years due to the severe recession, was lifted. Because our situation is different from most of the Church's enterprises, we were not asked to "downsize" our operation in any way but only to conserve resources as best we could, including the request not to replace unless absolutely necessary all of the retirees or others who were leaving the university for a variety of reasons. Since the board did not ask us to reduce the size of our student body, faculty, or work force on a permanent basis, but only to become more efficient, we have worked very hard to make sure that our new hires and replacements are of the highest quality in our quest to fulfill our ongoing prophetic charge of making BYU the best it can be. We have learned much and will be stronger than ever before in the days and years ahead.

We continue to be asked to be conservative in our expenditures and requests, and our resource planning process has reflected the courage of our university leadership in this regard. They have listened very carefully to what our leaders have asked of us. In turn, the

board has given commendation and thanks to our university leadership broadly.

Some of you who are new will recognize that you have been recruited, selected, and hired with special care at every level. Because this is so important to the university and the board of trustees, we anticipate that it will take another two to four years to fully staff all of our open or soon-to-be-open slots. In the meantime, I once again offer my sincere expressions of gratitude to all who have cooperated with and supported our efforts so admirably during this interesting period. We have not faced the horrific challenges some other institutions have faced in forced layoffs, closures of departments or programs, and other financial challenges. We have, however, dealt with significant pain and tremendous sacrifice on the part of many who have not let our progress or the quality of the work we do lag in any way. What a wonderful tribute to the cause we represent and to those of you who are responsible for making it happen so well.

We can all appreciate that our economy is still fragile and uncertain. We are so grateful for the care, wisdom, and consistent support of our board of trustees in these interesting times. It is clear that our principles will not change and the continued determination of our current leadership in the various organizations across campus is noticed and highly valued by our board and other Church leaders.

As many of you know, Professor John S. Tanner completed his extended term as academic vice president earlier this year and is now presiding over the Brazil São Paulo South Mission of the Church. He served with distinction and has left us with the university even more solid than it was when he assumed the position. We are grateful for all he has done and look forward to him rejoining the faculty in 2014.

Although he did not seek the job, I have been very pleased that we were able to persuade Professor Brent W. Webb to assume the

assignment as our academic vice president. On the job for only a few months, he is already making significant contributions to the university that will endure for a very long time. The active faculty will have the opportunity to hear from him this afternoon. We are very grateful for his willingness to serve. He brings much to his office and to the President's Council.

In another important transition in university leadership, Dean David B. Magleby recently completed his second term as the leader of the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences. Dave has been a tireless and courageous administrator, and I am very happy that he will have the privilege of a long overdue leave at the University of Michigan this next academic year. He has set a strong example and has made difficult decisions that have significantly strengthened this very large and complex college over the last decade. Many others have also completed various assignments at the university recently, and I hope they all know of our gratitude for their service and contributions.

In that context, I am pleased to add my welcome to Professor Benjamin M. Ogles, who is now serving as the new dean of the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences. He comes back to BYU after many years of distinguished accomplishment and leadership at Ohio University. In this college, as in others, we have what a coach might describe as a "deep bench"—meaning we have several faculty members who are qualified to assume these major leadership roles. It is a credit to the college and the university that a person of the stature of Ben Ogles has been recruited to join us and work with us in our assigned quest to become the best we can be.

I might mention others of you of great distinction who are joining us or who are assuming new responsibilities. BYU is an amazing place, and the talent of our leadership is substantial, as is their devotion to our unique and special mission. Across the board,

I don't believe we have ever in our history had a stronger corps of exceptional people working to help fulfill the prophetic mission of Brigham Young University.

Any report on our activities and achievements should also make mention of our various performing groups, the individual achievements of students and faculty, and the continued high recognition given to so many of our academic programs. Likewise, the past year has been an impressive and memorable one in athletics.

There is a very long list of team championships, all-American honors, and other recognitions. Jimmer Fredette and his teammates brought much attention and admiration to our university, and we could mention other athletes, performers, events, and high accomplishments as well.

Perhaps the point of more questions than any other during the past year with respect to athletics has been the decision we made, with the full support and encouragement of our board of trustees, to leave the Mountain West Conference and become independent in football while joining the West Coast Conference in most other sports.

Although many still do not believe or understand our true motivations for these decisions, it is really quite straightforward. It is to do our very best to position our athletic programs and other components of the university in such a way that our light can shine brightly for as many of our friends, alumni, Church members, and others as possible. While we had hoped that our previous arrangement would provide the exposure and coverage we desired and knew to be possible, it simply did not develop that way. Meanwhile, we are now free to associate closely with a group of academically excellent, faith-based universities in the West Coast Conference. The landscape in competitive university athletics continues to shift, but don't be too anxious to accept the rumors and prognostications about possible

new allegiances and relationships for BYU. We are delighted to be right where we are.

Now, with the tremendous reach and capacity of BYU Broadcasting and our new partnership with ESPN, most of our key athletic contests will be available nationally with the possibility for all interested fans and others to see them wherever they live. In this we will be able to maintain our strict policy against Sunday play and also protect the other necessary and significant values so unique to BYU.

In more than half of my annual university conference messages, I have addressed the matter of our accreditation as a university. If you are hoping that I will again raise this matter this August, I won't disappoint you. For those who might wish that I would not mention this topic, I hope you will forgive me. In fact, it is a reality never far from our thinking and consideration. It is not because our accreditation or academic standing is in question. It is because, nationally, accreditation is coming under increasing scrutiny and pressure from a number of sources. It is also because having impeccable accreditation is our best defense against the various assaults we receive with respect to our values and our religious mission.

One of the great comforts to us is that we have always tried to be completely open with others and ourselves as to who we really are and what it is that we are really about. In that sense, we have recently reviewed with care and concern our board-approved Mission Statement and the BYU Aims, which have been in place for many years. In the very unlikely event that these are foreign or foggy to you, please look them up in available documents and on our website. It is a testimony to me that they have stood the test of time and are as relevant and reflective of who and what we are as they have ever been. The expectations and requirements in this area continue to be increased, and we will need to continue to respond, grow, and improve. We are grate-

ful to Jim Gordon, Brent Webb, Jeff Keith, and the many others throughout the university who take our responsibilities seriously and are faithfully and expertly preparing for the reports to be submitted and the accrediting team visits scheduled in the coming months.

As this group all appreciates, BYU is absolutely unique in the universe of American higher education. Not everyone—individuals or institutions—understands or appreciates who and what we are. Because we are different, aspiring for greatness in both our religious and academic missions, it is absolutely essential that we represent ourselves in the very best and most accurate light.

There are some things that do favor us. First, we as an institution have the privilege and responsibility to define ourselves, our mission, our identity, and our goals for ourselves. It is by our own stated standards and aspirations that we are largely judged. Second, the quality of a BYU education and the complementary recognition accorded our present students and accomplished alumni are better known than ever before. Third, and I say this carefully and advisedly, we have the guidance and support of a remarkably supportive and insightful board of trustees who feel with us the hand of heaven as we attempt to move the university forward. Fourth, we have uncommonly dedicated and competent faculty and staff who are committed to making BYU shine in this process by assuring that we are really doing what we aspire to do in excellent ways and then presenting the evidence of these behaviors in compelling clarity. Fifth, and likely more important than most considerations, are the outstanding young people who come to BYU to study.

In terms of objective qualifications, by no means sufficient by themselves for admission to this university, our top 1,000 students in each entering class would be admissible at virtually any university in the country. Incredibly, to those who don't know us well, four out of

every five offers we make to prospective students are accepted, and those students come to BYU. Only Harvard rivals BYU in terms of the high rate of entrance of the students who are accepted.

Meanwhile, there are also some issues that challenge us more than ever before. Because of the scrutiny that the accrediting agencies themselves feel from both the public and the government, their requirements are becoming more demanding, arduous, and consuming of effort and resources. Let me give just two examples in this regard. Learning objectives and specific learning outcomes are required for not only every academic program but now also for every course that we offer. You can imagine the amount of additional work and effort required as we come into compliance. While this is occurring, the cycle of reaccreditation is shortening. What was once a ten-year rotation is now a seven-year rotation, and, to even out the number of annual reviews for the agencies, we are in the midst of a five-year cycle that has no reflection on our high quality. Some institutions have one or three years in their cycle under the new standards.

In addition to our university-wide accreditation, our various departments and programs must deal with more than forty different discipline-specific accreditation requirements and processes. Thus we have more than ample opportunity to explain who we are, what we do, and how we do it so very well for the wonderful and able students we serve. Almost our entire campus community is involved in these endeavors in one way or another, and I express sincere and profound appreciation for the consistent, wise, and loyal efforts made in behalf of Brigham Young University.

In the last few years a number of factors have encouraged us to move away from Blackboard and develop the BYU Learning Suite. This new set of digital learning tools allows us to integrate our university AIM data with the tools that faculty and students need

most. We feel that both faculty and students will be greatly benefited by the integration and new functionality that the BYU Learning Suite offers. If you have questions and would like to learn more about the BYU Learning Suite and the transition time line, please attend today's noon session in the Wilkinson Center Ballroom.

One of the features of BYU that impressed me when I first arrived and continues to encourage me today is the contribution made by our Faculty Center—especially to new faculty but also to some of us who have been around for a relatively longer time but are still trying to improve our teaching performance and contributions. I know of no other institution that has the consistent, long-term involvement with new and continuing faculty we are blessed to have at BYU. I am confident that those of you faculty members just arriving at BYU will avail yourselves of the help and encouragement in your duties that you will find there.

Of course the activities of the Faculty Center do not replace or compete with the necessary collegial support and mentoring that you have the right to expect from senior colleagues and especially from your deans and chairs. All of us who have experienced some success in our academic careers must give appropriate credit and thanks to those who have mentored and taught us by example and by precept. Mentoring at every level is vital for both the faculty and the university. It can also be one of the most rewarding parts of the significant work done here.

One of the important activities of the Faculty Center in recent months has been a study to determine the characteristics of those deemed to be the most successful as exemplary teaching members of our faculty in creating an atmosphere in their classes that is both spiritually strengthening and intellectually enlarging. Last spring, Professor Alan Wilkins, representing himself and several colleagues, made an

interesting and insightful presentation to our senior academic and administrative leadership on this important study related to the hopes and expectations of our students. They have gathered data not only from the most effective of our faculty based on student assessment but also from the students themselves.

I believe Academic Vice President Brent W. Webb will speak to this topic in more detail this afternoon, but I do want to mention what was most instructive and impressive for me. First, there is not one size or approach that fits all. Second, what the faculty member does and how she or he acts with students affects them much more than the specifics of what is said. For example, faculty members who make obvious efforts to know their students by name and are clearly interested in them as people with impressive and important potential seem to have a much greater positive impact than they would with their degree of polish in pedagogy or their command of subject. Third, the students are very attuned to whether or not they perceive the faculty member to be authentic and genuine. Striving to live the gospel and being fully aligned with the Mission and Aims of a BYU Education seem much more important to the students than do specific actions such as having prayer in class or having scriptural references included in discussions of class topics.

I am grateful to our BYU Faculty Center colleagues and to all who have contributed to this important work that is helping us understand ourselves better than ever. I am grateful to our students—who have been thoughtful, candid, sometimes critical, but usually quite generous in their contributions as well. All of this can help us become the best we can be.

I am now at the stage of my life and my BYU experience in which my wife, Sharon, occasionally reminds me as I begin to speak that I have already shared a specific treasured story or experience with a particular friend or audience. When I do so, I hope you will forgive me

if you are so subjected to such a trial. As Elder Maxwell used to say, when he was not much older than I am, “I’ve reached the stage where I can hide my own Easter eggs.” On the other hand, there are some things worth repeating.

I have mentioned before our need to be constantly monitoring and improving our collegiality, civility, courtesy, and sensitivity to each other. I believe we are making progress, but we still have some work to do. Elder Quentin L. Cook’s April 2011 general conference address touched upon some of these issues that should concern members of our community. I hope you will all review and ponder his message.

We emphasize with some regularity the importance of integrity in all that we do—not in just the big things, as vital as they are, but also in the seemingly little things that can set an unfortunate pattern or cause lapses in judgment or conduct that would not occur if careful antecedent consideration had occurred. This is not just a BYU issue, although it is a BYU concern. The First Presidency gave counsel and caution on these matters to the General Authorities and Area Authorities in a training meeting recently. We hope and expect that you will all stay well away from the line.

Although in the past I have shared my views on the relationship between teaching and research or creative work, honorable questions are still asked. For that reason, let me share a part of a paragraph from the University Rank and Status Policy that is the standard by which we judge these things and that I endorse:

*The highest purpose of scholarly and creative work [scholarship] is to serve God and humanity. Scholarship should contribute to the university mission. It should achieve one or more of the following objectives: improving the education of the minds and spirits of students, contributing to the expansion of truth throughout the world, facilitating the solution of pressing world problems, and enhancing the quality of people’s lives. Scholarship*

*extends the university's influence and reputation, which benefits our students, serves our local and worldwide communities, and makes friends for the university and the Church. Scholarship should infuse and inspire the faculty member's teaching both directly and indirectly. It must not interfere with or detract from teaching, but support and strengthen it. University faculty members must be learners in order to be teachers worthy of the name. They must be intellectually alive and current in their disciplines, not only through participating in the substantive developments of the discipline, but also through constantly honing the skills and tools of scholarship used in the discipline. [University Rank and Status Policy 3.4.1]*

There is more, and I invite you, if you are interested, to read the entire section of this policy. I did not write it or participate in its creation, but I do endorse it and believe it accurately describes the standards by which we should operate.

Because of Sister Samuelson's caution and because I have now had the privilege of addressing this particular group many times— notwithstanding, mercifully, that some of you are new—I have read each of my previous annual university conference addresses again this past summer. While I can see now where I might have said some things with greater clarity, I do stand behind what I have said, because I believed it then and do so fully now. For those of you with excessive time and boring lives, you might also refer to those addresses, should you have any doubts or confusion about the things I regard to be of significant importance at BYU.

Since very few of my thoughts are truly original, and I intentionally refer without apology to our founding documents, scriptural supports, and the comments of prophet leaders, an even better and likely more productive exercise for you would be to go to these original sources yourselves. I will not give an exhaustive list today but will encourage you

to develop your own. Our Mission and Aims documents are widely available, and I hope they will be even more widely read, understood, and incorporated in your thinking and your doing. President J. Reuben Clark Jr.'s "The Charted Course of the Church in Education," President Spencer W. Kimball's "The Second Century of Brigham Young University" address, the talks and presentations by President Hinckley and President Monson at BYU, and others will do for you what you need to do for our students. That is, be spiritually strengthening and intellectually enlarging. And it goes without saying that regular and rigorous study in the scriptures is necessary in addition to whatever else in a general or disciplinary way you are reading, writing, and pondering.

In my concluding moments, let me tell you about an interesting exercise our President's Council has undertaken in recent months. Commissioner Paul V. Johnson suggested that we consider our thoughts and predictions about what our university would be like in ten years. I believe his purpose in asking this of each institution is so that he might help us and also our board anticipate resources and efforts that will be necessary for our improvement and capacity to meet increasing challenges.

Each member of the President's Council undertook a study in his or her areas of responsibility and was asked to think about the things we must not only be prepared to react upon but also what may impact us from the outside. In other words, what are those things we must be doing internally to reach the prophetic destiny with which we have been charged? At the outset, and today, on many particulars, we are agnostic. That is, we do not know fully what the future holds for us. On the other hand, because we know the basis for our organization and because of our understanding of the remarkable concern and support for BYU by our prophet leaders, we understand the responsibility we have to keep

moving this great institution along its charted course in becoming what it eventually must be.

With good reason and conviction, we believe that in the next decade BYU will be much like it is today, but better. Some institutions are struggling for survival. We are not. Some are striving to change their missions or their roles in education. We are not. Some have forgotten their foundational roots and reasons for establishment. We hope we have not and are committed that this will not happen.

We recognize that while some things remain the same, some are changing dramatically, and we will need to be wise enough and courageous enough to recognize when and how we will adapt. Let me share a few examples.

Our auxiliary services have facilitated the campus very well for many years, but they are under immense pressure in a number of ways. There is increased competition in such areas as the Bookstore as we transition from traditional textbooks and change the way we obtain course materials. Our beautiful campus is aging, although a great job has been done to keep facilities in excellent condition, and new ones are added when necessary. Technology is wonderful but creates tremendous changes in our necessary personnel qualifications, characteristics, needs, and opportunities. A similar point could be made about the ever-increasing regulations and reporting requirements facing all institutions of higher education.

From an academic perspective, I have already mentioned the rapid trends in accreditation and regulation. The nature of our libraries is changing rapidly. We will still have and want books, but we see new and expanding digital and internet information distribution models. New disciplines are emerging and older ones are changing. Traditional lectures and other learning modalities are being supplemented or replaced with online learning.

With respect to students, they are changing too. Not only are there going to be more

than ever, and more with excellent qualifications, but, in some respects, their needs and expectations are different as well. Traditional dormitories are no longer acceptable to many, and apartment-style living is becoming the norm. More students with various disabilities or special needs are arriving, and financial aid for students from both public and private sources is at best uncertain and likely dramatically decreasing. With changes in the health care delivery system being mandated, the future of student health services is uncertain. Our students have contributed significantly to the recognition Utah has received as the top volunteering state in the nation, with Provo being the top volunteering city. Last year approximately 24,000 BYU students participated in some meaningful service. The list can go on. What the students choose to do and are asked to do is different from what past generations did and will almost certainly continue to change.

I have mentioned the shifts we have made in athletics. Much of the nation is caught up in an unsustainable arms race that we hope to avoid and believe we will. We feel most fortunate to be members of the West Coast Conference. Without exception, each of the nine members, now including BYU, has a rich and ongoing religious identity and relationship. Each is highly selective academically, and all are determined to maintain their focus on high academic quality and practical religious values and practices while sponsoring athletics in an excellent way as well.

I have mentioned our excitement about developments in BYU Broadcasting. While we will continue to have the fundamental educational broadcasting mission we have always had, we are also asked by the Church to help attract and retain larger audiences of both LDS and non-LDS people who share our values. We are still finding our way but anticipate continued success as we stick with our principles and prophetic guidance.

We will have expanding roles in Continuing Education that will be different and will accommodate more students than ever. We will continue to serve our communities but will also always remember that our primary focus is on our campus and the students here. Because of advances in technology, built on the firm foundation of many years of innovation in delivery methodology, we see tremendous possibilities for increasing our reach and our effectiveness.

We are committed, with board direction, to continue to be a university of positive distinction in all that we do. We are and will be a primarily undergraduate teaching university with selected graduate programs of accomplishment and stature that support, rather than supplant, our primary teaching mission. Through our various programs, both on

campus and around the world, including the vehicle of BYU Broadcasting, we will advance the message and mission of BYU so that it will be recognized as a light unto the world.

We are aware of the risks of hubris but also are grateful for the assurances we have as a prophet-led and revelation-guided institution of higher learning that is committed to fulfilling its mission “in [the Lord’s] own way” (D&C 104:16). It is my conviction we can and will succeed in helping Brigham Young University meet the charge given to it and to all who are blessed to study and serve here.

God does live, and this is an important part of the work authored by Him and His Beloved Son and our Savior Jesus Christ. We are led by apostles and prophets who love and support BYU. Of these things I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.