

Fall 2015 Convocation to Faculty and Staff

August 17, 2015

I am so glad to see you all this morning as we begin this adventure, our 50th year. The college has been an amazing story threaded with a deep spirit and commitment to learning. I would quote famed writer Maya Angelou in *Rainbow in the Cloud*.

The onus is upon us all to work to improve the human condition. Perform good deeds, for that is truly the way to battle the forces of entropy that are at work in our world. The composite of all our efforts can have an effect. Good done anywhere is good done everywhere.

We are back to continue this good work. Welcome to this new school year and the fresh opportunity we all have in various ways to generate a little magic, to light a fire, to change a life. This is what we do through education; this is what we do at the College of Southern Idaho. At this point I would remember two longtime supporters of the college who passed away this year, Dr. Ben Katz, and Dr. Harry Brumbach. Dr. Brumbach was President of the civic group that built the Fine Arts Auditorium we all sit in today. They were both early supports of this college, and throughout their lives in Twin Falls, they were fierce advocates of our good work. I would also recognize my administrative colleagues Todd Schwarz, Mike Mason, Eric Nielson, and Curtis Eaton for their amazing work and collegiality this past year as we have successfully faced many challenges and opportunities. Many of you have seen members of the CSI Board of Trustees around campus a lot: Karl Kleinkopf, Bob Keegan, Thad Scholes, Jan Mittleider, and Laird Stone. They have taken time to be involved and engaged in so many activities with faculty, staff, and students. They have worked very hard as elected volunteers in service to this

institution. When you see them around campus, please take a moment to say thanks. I would also recognize the director of the CSI Refugee Center, Mr. Zeze Raswama for his respect and grace.

And change is constant, cycles inherent in our lives. It is with some sadness that I announce today two key retirements for later this fall, both planned for a long time, and that time has come. We will be starting the search process in the next weeks for both positions. Randy Dill will be stepping down from his role as Director of Physical Plant. Mike Mason will be retiring at the end of December. While there are many stories suitable for a fine roast, today I will simply note both of these colleagues have given their full measure to this place and to us.

As Todd has noted, we have made some amazing strides this last year and over the summer in refocusing our efforts for our students. Through these initiatives, we hope to see more students entering post-secondary education. We hope to see more students persist and succeed at CSI, graduating for transfer or certification. We hope to see this campus and our outreach centers grow and develop as centers of the performing and visual arts, athletics, entertainment, and most importantly, education.

As many of you know, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities reaccredited CSI this year after the spring site visit. The report is on our website, and I encourage you to read it. We are dealing with the three recommendations which entail core theme development for the next seven-year cycle, broad an d ongoing outcomes assessment across all programs and programmatic assessment at the liberal arts level, and completing the final stages of business office process and procedure improvements. We received five commendations, and they are:

1. The College is commended for its creation of a strong learning community that reflects a deep commitment to professional development for faculty, staff, and administrators.
2. The College is commended for its focus on successful student transitions as demonstrated by innovative support for prospective students, the creation of clearly articulated advising pathways, and accurate and collaborative transfer advising.
3. The College is commended for its ability to effectively finance and construct teaching, learning, service, and event facilities that create a positive environment for employees, students, and the community. Facilities and grounds on the CSI campus meet exceptionally high standards of maintenance.
4. The College is commended for its development of strong community partnerships that leverage resources and increase economic and social opportunities for the region.
5. The Board of Trustees and executive leadership of the College are commended for their open and transparent processes, adherence to high ethical standards, and willingness to employ best practices during times of challenge and rapid change.

I am very proud of the work of the college as it prepared for the NWCCU site visit, and I believe evaluators rightly recognized areas where improvement is needed and areas where we are exemplary.

We have some challenges as we do every year. Declining enrollment continues, and we expect the semester to start with numbers down between 5-10 percent. Declining enrollment can be attributed to any number of factors, among them a very low unemployment rate in the region. In fact, our headcount versus FTE

indicates more students are taking fewer classes, lending some credence to the idea many of our students are perhaps working while going to school.

Another challenge is connected to the state's Enrollment Workload Adjustment (or EWA) formula which amounts to a claw back this year of over \$400,000 with more projected for next year. We have been working with the Office of the State Board to seek some sort of relief or mitigation in this area.

The cost of doing business is the story of rising costs in health insurance, employee compensation, facilities maintenance, and so on.

These challenges provide us with opportunities to reflect and revise our thinking about education. Part of the puzzle is figuring out how to bolster enrollment. As I mentioned in the spring State of the College address, we are focusing on getting more students from high school into post-secondary education. Idaho has a reasonable high school graduation rate, around 85%, but of those graduates only about half go on to any post-secondary education. The go-on rate is dismal, and Idaho is at the bottom of the list.

The Curriculum Committee has been actively reviewing and revising general education in concert with colleagues across the state for several years now. Their good work is manifested in many initiatives to improve persistence and completion. For instance, nearly all of our remedial courses have been eliminated, and remediation processes are embedded in contemporary approaches to learning such as flipped classrooms, paired courses, co-requisite and plus classes in the gateway areas of language arts and mathematics. Moreover, we have been working on ways to refine course offerings, making clearer pathways to completion, clearer roadmaps, hopefully less confusing than before. I applaud the work of the assembled chairs who are the Curriculum Committee. I applaud the attitudes of our

faculty and advisors and student services personnel and those in the business office who are working cooperatively, without silos and in service to student success.

This past year or so, faculty have been convening in Brown Bag luncheons and teacher training workshops, organic efforts from professionals who seek to be better at their jobs, not just as content experts but as purveyors of knowledge, as teachers. As was mentioned earlier this morning and as was part of my commitment last year, we have hired an Instructional Designer position, Dr. Janaea Triplett-Newell, to enhance these efforts. Last fall, I introduced the Innovation Circle Grants. In a few weeks, the two teams awarded the grant will present publicly. Also in a few weeks, I'll be rolling out the next iteration of the Innovation Circle Grants. Both the presentations and the grant guidelines will be announced soon.

There will be many projects on campus throughout the year reflecting repurposing of space and attendant relocation of personnel. For instance, the space formerly occupied by Community Education will be reconfigured to accommodate the Instructional Technology and Institutional Effectiveness units. Community Education has moved to the centrally located and accessible Fine Arts Auditorium. The gymnasium has all new lower seating, and we hope to have the upper bleachers redone in time for volleyball season. You may have noticed a few trees taken down over the summer, part of the management plan for campus which includes removal of diseased trees and plants and a replacement schedule to keep campus one of the most beautiful in the country.

There will be many more projects, and these will be generated by the new Master Plan. Last spring, many of you provided input along with members of the community to CTA, the firm contracted to develop a new master plan for CSI, our

roadmap for the next 50 years. The plan is in the final phases, and we hope to have a complete document sometime this fall.

Speaking of 50 years, you heard this morning the Bi-Centennial Committee's report on the many celebrations to come this year. I am looking forward to celebrating CSI's journey. Part of this is the publication of Dr. Jim Gentry's book, Meeting Needs and Creating Opportunities: A History of The College of Southern Idaho. The book should be out this fall. Jim did a wonderful job of research which included his usual diligence with written records but also many hours of interviews with past and current employees and many community members. There have been many hands helping Jim, and I'd like to thank Deb Stuart, Whitney Smith, and Ken Bingham for their work.

I have often talked about the power of relationship, and in past addresses, I have challenged you all to think of that person in your past who brought you to this day, here, now, a professional serving the greater good through education and in support of education. I asked you to remember when you caught the spark and to reflect on yourself at CSI—are you preparing the way for the next you? Are you bringing magic into someone's life here at the college so that years from now, that person will be inspiring the next generation of learners? Again, Maya Angelou has expressed this powerfully and far better than I have. She says, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel (p. 41)."

I am excited by the energized commitment we have from our all of us, many who are new and many who are in new roles. I feel we are in the midst of a great cooperative effort, something with a slightly new feel to it, but which is the soul of this college and our work.

In this excitement, I know we have hard work ahead, and I know we are up to the task. As Edward Abbey wrote in his great work *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*,

May your trails be crooked, winding, lonesome, dangerous, leading to the most amazing view. May your mountains rise into and above the clouds. May your rivers flow without end, meandering through pastoral valleys tinkling with bells, past temples and castles and poets' towers into a dark primeval forest where tigers belch and monkeys howl, through miasmal and mysterious swamps and down into a desert of red rock, blue mesas, domes and pinnacles and grottos of endless stone, and down again into a deep vast ancient unknown chasm where bars of sunlight blaze on profiled cliffs, where deer walk across the white sand beaches, where storms come and go as lightning clangs upon the high crags, where something strange and more beautiful and more full of wonder than your deepest dreams waits for you — beyond that next turning of the canyon walls.

My best to you this new year. Thank you for your passion and joy and dedication to education and our students. Here's to a wonderful, challenging journey, full of mystery and perhaps uncertainty and positively rich in growth and wonder!