

## **State of the College**

*Presented to the assembled faculty and staff of the College of Southern Idaho on January 13, 2014 by*

*President Jeff Fox*

Good morning, and welcome to the beginning of a new chapter for all of us here at the College of Southern Idaho. I am honored to be standing here as the fourth president of the college, and I want to recognize and thank the Board of Trustees and all of you for your support and confidence in me. It needs to be said publicly and clearly: I will give the full measure of my ability in service to you, our students, the college, and the community.

I have three important items here. First, thanks to Jim Gentry for stepping out of retirement last semester to be Acting Chair of the Social Sciences Department. Second, I am so happy to welcome Todd Schwarz back to his home here at CSI. Finally, we have all been so fortunate that Curtis Eaton stepped in as Interim President these last months. Curtis, heartfelt thanks for everything.

Today, you will not see any Power Point slides as part of this presentation. The charts and facts of our work will be part of my presentation to the Joint Finance and Appropriation Committee, JAFC, and the House and Senate Education Committees next week in Boise. For those interested, that Power Point will be posted on our website after the upcoming Legislative Week.

Today I want to share a bit about how I see the College and our tomorrows together in this great enterprise. Some of you have heard me say this before—we do not wait for the future; we create it. What tools and what intention and what spirit will help us to create this future? Today, I will explore three key aspects.

The first is best framed as a question: Who Are We? It's a complicated question because we are a complex group. Here are some of my thoughts. I hope you will each see some of yourself as I speak of your colleagues.

We are Jette Morache and Russ Tremayne who recently co-edited the marvelous book Surviving Minidoka. Both Jette and Russ are tireless representatives of the College in our greater service community, giving lectures, taking students on field trips, and in Russ' case, annually organizing *The Civil Liberties Symposium*.

We are Bill Ebener, energetic advocate of STEM education and outreach to our public school partners. Bill is also famous for his practical demonstration of compressed matter in a time-space continuum called his office.

We are Cindy Dickson, one of many outstanding teachers at the College and also mentor to her new colleague Christie Solomon.

We are Gary Lauer, who recently co-authored a mystery novel with his wife.

We are Brian Sprinkle and Hank Bauman and Cody Thornton who rebuilt the Welding Program into an outstanding opportunity for growth and training and who participated in the broader community by creating welding projects and welding art to college fundraising efforts.

We are Jody Rockett who recently presented a paper in Paris, France and was honored for her work by being named one of the Top 15 Veterinary Technology Professors in the nation.

We are Tina Standlee who works tirelessly to monitor and manage financial reports and information with a smile and good cheer. She has also recently completed her Master's Degree and represents that drive and attention to her own professional development.

We are Catrina Chapple who has also continued her education by attaining her Masters and Educational Specialist degrees. She is a vital and collegial connection between student services and instructional administration, working not only with students but with instructional deans to make sure we are getting students in classes.

We are Jasmine Lopez whose smile and good cheer exemplify the best of CSI's face to our students as she works with her colleagues to recruit and advise students.

We are John Bottinger who oversees an amazing and dedicated maintenance crew. The results are obvious in every corner of campus, inside and out.

We are Chika Daggett who quietly and efficiently manages the many aspects of web design and update requests.

We are Elaine Bryant, ever energetic and optimistic advocate for CSI. She is the champion for the Gooding Center and, like most CSI employees, routinely goes the extra mile with a smile.

We are Randy Rogers who recently compiled a 300+ win record and did so as leader and mentor for his women's basketball teams over the years here at CSI.

We are Jaime Tigue who is a champion for wellness, a tireless advocate for health and education.

We are Planetarium Manager Rick Greenwald who spent countless hours installing and configuring the new Digistar system in the Herrett Museum and who dazzled area legislators with a specially designed show this last December.

We are Jud Harmon, actor, technician, master of ceremonies, and representative of the team in the Fine Arts Building that makes events like this one possible.

We are Deb Wilson from the Foundation who loves her job of giving out over \$1,000,000 annually to our students, and who tells the College's story so well and effectively that the CSI Foundation now sits in the top tier of community college foundations nationally.

We are Jay Sneddon, active and respectful connection between IT and faculty, keeping lines of communication open and working when the tech divide challenges us all.

We are Judy Hansen, writer, poet, and Professor of Developmental Language Arts and English who was recently elected as the incoming Faculty Senate President and who chairs the annual Passport and Passages Conference that brings together college, university and high school English faculty.

We are Randy Smith and Jan Simpkin and Beth Hewes, champions of sustainability and community awareness and service learning.

We are all these people, and I could have told this story more than 400 times this morning, a note of excellence about each CSI employee. CSI is all these wonderful, energetic, visionary, kind, passionate, efficient people. Each of us brings something to the table, something that supports our culture of excellence. This is who we are.

Knowing who we are, then, I would ask What Do We Do? How do we translate the excellence of spirit into action and service? The facts are the easy part, and here they are. We have over 18,000 enrollments each year, made up of 36% full-time students. 48% of our students come from the counties of Jerome and Twin Falls. 96% of our students are in Idaho. We have 42 foreign students. 63% of our students are female. Of all students, 49% are 21 or younger; 10% are 65 or older. In our top three areas of study, roughly 25% of students are Cross-Disciplinary majors (Liberal Arts), 16% study in Health Science and Human Services-related fields, and 11% are Social Science majors. The CSI Foundation gave more than \$1.2 million to over 1,000 students last year. Federal Financial Aid supported over 4,500

students with a total of about \$27 million dollars. These are of interest, of course, for the inputs and outputs form the basis of program and budget; these figures are of interest to external agencies for comparative purposes at the statehouse and in national cohort-based reports. But though these facts represent us in some ways, they are not what we do.

Let's start at the core: we exist to teach. Every operation at CSI is dedicated to that core, and without that we do not exist. Whether you serve in the Business Office, Student Services, Maintenance, at a desk, on the grounds, in the cloud, on the main campus, or in Burley, you are here for students and our educational mission.

What do we do? We recruit from far and near, offering promise of quality. We enroll and advise, working together as a team to bring students here, engage them in planning for their future. In the classroom in whatever mode, we educate, teaching the proficiencies and skills at hand. More than that, and as a mark of excellence, we inspire our students. We are not a business, though there are aspects of business operations in the management of budget and operation. Contrary to some opinions, we are not a transaction, a fee for service operation, though there are necessarily features of that as money changes hands. We are transformational, and we encourage students to see what they learn here has application beyond a job. We hope to instill the belief that learning provides a platform forever, that in days to come as our students move into and through careers, through life with relationships, perhaps children, as part of communities, they will know it is essential to be informed, to critically analyze information, to determine direction based on these things, to be of service to one another, to work toward a better society, to be in the truest sense of the word, an informed, civil, and active citizen who volunteers, who provides service, and who is philanthropic. So much is immeasurable, for our work is seed planting, a promise growing in some future often beyond our walls. Our work is having faith that what we do here will make a positive difference, whether it is preparing students for a trade or for

transfer or for enrichment. The skills we teach are essential tools in this transformation. This is what we do.

The final question for today is Where Are We Going? Wendell Berry records some thoughts about change. He writes,

Increasingly over the last forty years, the thought has come to me that the old world in which our people lived by the work of their hands, close to weather and earth, plants and animals, was the true world; and that the new world of cheap energy and even cheaper money, honored greed, and dreams of liberation from every restraint, is mostly theater. This new world seems a jumble of scenery and props never quite believable, an economy of fantasies and moods, in which it is hard to remember either the timely world of nature or the eternal world of the prophets and poets. (Berry, *Andy Catlett*)

Many of us are old enough with connections to that old world to understand Berry writes with a sense of sadness and nostalgia, even a longing for a fading world. But some of us here today and certainly most of our students may not understand this sentiment, for theirs is and always has been for them the new world; it is their normal. In this new world, then, our challenge is to be wise enough to teach connections to those important things that come from our own worlds, our earned knowledge. We should remember the essence of learning is respect for one another, listening, inspiring students with a sense of wonder and excitement. We must be the passionate teachers who somehow transform students. So what does this mean in the context of where we are going? I have some ideas.

In the next several months, I will be planning with members of the College to develop strategies to engage faculty and staff in innovation and improvement in service to the new world landscape of technologies, online and hybrid environments, challenges to the long-standing tradition of seat time as a measure of learning.

For instance, I plan to develop Innovation and Discovery Grants. What would happen if four faculty from different disciplines were given time and support to develop something new? Think of this scenario: a faculty member from math, performing arts, physical education, and psychology form a team and apply for a grant that allows them each a release of one class to work together on a project of their choosing. At the end of the semester, what might they develop or invent relative to improved instruction or new and innovative ways to address issues in delivery methods or credit load or the art of teaching?

Technology is here. Period. Education uses technology and should as a supplement to effective teaching and learning, but the development and thought processes behind using technology move so quickly that it is almost impossible to keep up. Some initiatives, like MOOCs, capture the collective fancy of students, legislators, and even teachers, but when tested, fail to account for that basic mission—completion with demonstrated proficiency. Sebastian Thrun and his Udacity experiment ended in his acknowledgement that it was less effective than a regular classroom setting—fewer students completed and fewer passed. On the other hand, Sal Khan started his Khan Academy from his garage, and it has blossomed into one of the most effective teaching methodologies to date, the flipped classroom. This could only happen as technology became commensurate with his intention. I want to provide faculty the opportunity to work as Khan did, to use technology effectively in teaching. I will be proposing the development of instructional design as a part of our work, inviting teachers to learn not so much *how* to use technology, but more importantly to my mind, *why*.

The past couple of years, we have had a large group of faculty diligently developing a framework for our culture of Academic Integrity, and I am excited to begin implementing some of those proposals. Also, we have significant work on sustainability, service learning, and population wellness, and I hope to support this good work institutionally in the coming months and years.

I would pause a moment here to emphasize wellness. We have started to work on managing our health at CSI, and our partnership with SelectHealth and St. Luke's is the beginning of what I hope will be a conscious and deliberate effort on our part to be healthier, to actively pursue wellness. I challenge us all, myself included, to eat well, to exercise even a little every day, and to encourage one another on this journey.

To conclude, I believe each of us must find joy in what we do, a professional and personal value that drives us to come to work *here*. Of all the places we might work and share our talent, we *choose* here. CSI is the physical place we spend the vast majority of our waking hours. It is the place we come to be of service to something larger than ourselves, and so our charge for the future is to evolve with a foundation of excellence. I believe if everyone who connects with a student, from recruitment to advising to enrollment to the classroom, is that passionate person, we will succeed.

This is indeed a new chapter at the College of Southern Idaho, and we have a bright future in front of us. I know we are up to the challenge of tomorrow. I have faith we will always strive to be the best in everything we do here. I know we will support each other and our students and our community for the greater good. I know we will be looked upon for leadership as an exemplar of how to get things done right, and we will continue to fill that role with confidence and pride. Our goal at the end of the day is this: we will look around at each other, having traveled far together, and we will say to one another, "This was worth it. Job well done, my friends. Job well done."