

General Assembly Speech

Dr. Arthur C. Vailas

President, Idaho State University

July 5, 2006

Welcome students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends of Idaho State University! Laura and I are very happy to be here in Pocatello at last! We look forward to serving the University, the university communities, and living in the great state of Idaho. I am deeply honored and privileged to be President of Idaho State University and look forward to the exciting road ahead.

Idaho State University is rich with opportunity. It serves numerous regions of Idaho; it has a committed staff; creative faculty members; and promising students who care about their university. ISU has academic and research programs of excellence and most important of all, it has the energy, the vision and the desire to move to the next level.

ISU is a university with great impact in Idaho. Because of its extensive outreach facilities and campuses, ISU's influence is felt throughout the entire state. This University has made, and continues to make, a significant impact on Idaho's history, ecology, science and technology, economy, educational infrastructure, healthcare, art and culture.

This impact is felt as the members of each graduating class enter the workforce—applying the latest in knowledge and skills to build our economy and make this world a better place in which to live. This impact is also felt when a new discovery makes us safer or contributes to better medical care; when a beautiful artwork is created, or when technological developments improve our ability to communicate with each other.

Such impact is made possible by the citizens of Idaho, our legislators, and State Board of Education. The strength and nature of ISU's impact are due to the loyal commitment of our alumni and supporters, and ISU's talented and hard-working faculty, staff, and students.

As President, I will build upon the strengths of Idaho State University and set its trajectory to become a preeminent research university that will serve the people of Idaho, the nation and the world. Such a noble, worthwhile and ambitious goal can only be realized if the students, faculty, staff, alumni, community and the people of Idaho are willing to engage and be committed to this great dream...

The road to preeminence will yield many benefits along the way. Here are just three examples:

First, ISU will exhibit higher levels of research activity and opportunities for creativity. By increasing discovery of new knowledge and enabling greater creativity, we will expand educational opportunities for our students, and recruit and

retain the best faculty and staff. Further, we will be able to better compete in recruiting undergraduate and graduate students from Idaho, other states, and other nations.

By increasing research productivity, we will expose our students earlier in their educational development to opportunities to become creative, independent thinkers; culturally diverse; nationally competitive; and better prepared to enter the global economy. The pioneer spirit runs deep in Idahoans. If we embrace that spirit by pursuing originality, creativity, and seeking new opportunities, we will bring significant recognition to Idaho—resulting in economic growth and enhanced quality of life.

A second benefit of pursuing preeminence will be greater national and international recognition and a better position from which to compete for funding, faculty and students.

We will be in a better position to compete for both public and private funding to support our students, faculty, research programs, and infrastructure. The resulting national and international recognition and reputation will enhance the opportunity for partnerships among campus units, industry, government and other institutions within and outside Idaho.

A third major benefit of pursuing preeminence will be to increase ISU's capacity to contribute to the community.

ISU will have more intellectual capital and financial resources with which to help solve pressing societal problems, such as educational access and affordability, food security and access to health care and social services. ISU will be a stronger driving force in the creation of new jobs, enhancing opportunities for volunteerism, promoting the diversity of culture, bringing national and international interest and investment, enhancing the recognition of Idaho's anthropological, cultural and geologic history and the preservation of Idaho's wonderful environment.

What are some of the opportunities that I see for Idaho State University? There are many, but I am going to discuss just a few in the interest of time.

- ***Medical Education and Training***

ISU is a leader in Idaho's medical education and training programs. We offer a comprehensive array of degree and other training programs in the health professions throughout Idaho. The University offers an excellent premedical program and many programs in the allied health professions, from dietetics, to nursing, to pharmacy, to physical therapy—just to name a few.

Numerous times the state of Idaho has discussed the possibility of the state creating its first medical school. I believe the state of Idaho's challenge is whether ISU can be given

the resources to offer the MD degree, rather than creating a Medical School from scratch. Idaho State University already has many of the components of medical education, minus the MD degree...

What many people don't know is that ISU has already been involved in a distributive array of pre and post-MD training, such as medical residencies and specialties in Family Practice/Primary Care, and Orthopedic Surgery. Also, ISU contributes significantly to post residency fellowship programs, such as Sports Medicine. This is made possible through a well established affiliated statewide network between ISU and many hospitals and healthcare centers. Our faculty and students benefit tremendously from these partnerships which have a significant impact on building Idaho's workforce and economy in healthcare.

The time is right to move forward on a feasibility study to answer this question, for we have a state and national crisis associated with shortages in physician and health professional education.

- *Energy*

We are in a global energy crisis that threatens our economic future and environmental quality. The diminution of energy resources has created global instability... The state of Idaho has the opportunity to become a world-class energy corridor that focuses on alternative energy sources and ways to improve environmental quality. ISU is already well recognized for its educational and research programs in nuclear engineering and environmental sciences. I will encourage more and stronger partnerships with the Idaho National Laboratory, other universities, and industry so that we continue to build our energy research programs and further our economic development in the energy fields.

- *The Arts*

The L.E. and Thelma E. Stephens Performing Arts Center is a jewel of the Intermountain Region. It offers the opportunity to showcase the talents of our faculty and students, providing important infrastructure that supports scholarship in art, music, theater, dance. The Stephens Center brings world recognition to Idaho and Idaho State University—enhancing the marketing of Pocatello and surrounding areas.

During the transition, I visited with many of the constituents of the University. I am pleased to report that spirits are high, willingness to support the university in attaining its goals is promising, and my own excitement to begin leadership is overwhelming.

I have a few things I want to reaffirm to all of you:

First,

ISU's number one priority is its students. I have asked that advancement efforts of the university give highest priority to bolstering fundraising efforts for student scholarships.

I have asked academic affairs to immediately engage in efforts to improve student retention.

I have asked the leaders in student affairs and other areas throughout the university to improve employment opportunities for students, and where possible, provide job opportunities for students that would enhance their educational pursuits and increase post graduate employment throughout the world...

I am also asking the business community to offer cooperative and internship opportunities for our students. Today's job expectations are more sophisticated than in years past and the market is very competitive. We want the best preparation that we can possibly provide for our students—helping them enter successfully into a global economy.

Second,

I have asked for a more informative, responsive, and open budget process.

Third,

I have already begun to lay the groundwork for the implementation of a data enterprise system that will serve the data needs of the administration of this university. This system will enable us to know more about our students and their progress—enhance advising; simplify budget development, execution and reporting; manage financial aid; and facilitate risk assessment. I have already brought in experts in this area and am proceeding to establish a task force in communicating progress throughout the university and formulating an implementation strategy.

Fourth,

I have asked for a comprehensive student recruitment strategic plan from our colleges and centers that would improve our undergraduate and graduate enrollment. The plan would address recruitment efforts within Idaho, nationally and internationally. Some ISU alumni have already expressed interest in assisting the University in the recruitment of students.

In addition, I have encouraged all units to devise marketing plans for their programs that will bolster recruitment and fundraising efforts.

Most important of all, Idaho State University will develop a comprehensive strategic plan. However, before this can begin, we must take stock of ISU's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. I have asked the various leaders of university groups to begin this analysis with their constituents. Subsequently, the process of developing a strategic plan will involve input and review from students, faculty, staff, campus communities, alumni, political leadership, other educational institutions, government, and the business community.

I have established a President's Cabinet for the purpose of sharing information across various university groups. This will encourage assistance/input as well as keep key individuals informed about matters that significantly impact their constituents. It also provides the opportunity for each group to discuss in-depth issues with their leadership and ask for input from other areas of the university.

I would now like to introduce you to my cabinet, which consists of members of my administration and leaders of major university groups. We have an impressive array of talent here and I look forward to meeting weekly with all of them in an open exchange of information.

Would you each stand as I call your name and remain standing until I have named everyone...

Dr. Bob Wharton, Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dr. Kent Tingey, Vice President for Advancement
Dr. Ron McCune, Interim Vice President for Medical Education
Mr. Ken Prolo, Vice President for Financial Services
Dr. Douglas Covey, Vice President for Student Affairs
Mr. Paul Bubb, Athletic Director
Mr. Ryan Sargent, President of the Associated Students of ISU
Mr. David Sanna, President of the ISU Alumni Association
Dr. Karl de Jesus, Chairman of the Faculty Senate
Mr. Buddy Frazier, Director of Diversity
Mr. Bradley Hall, General Counsel
Mr. Ray Hart, representing Staff Council

Ladies and gentlemen, my cabinet.

Finally, I will be elevating the level of administrative reporting for research from an AVP to a VP for Research, reporting to the President. This change will not be made until ISU has successfully selected a VP for Research. Therefore, I will be consulting with the faculty and community leaders in appointing a search committee that will invite applications from a worldwide pool of candidates.

In closing, Laura and I are looking forward to working with all of you in building Idaho State University's future. Thank you!