



A University Commitment

by Jeffrey R. Holland, BYU's president

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It is a thrill for me as president of the university to extend a special greeting to all of you. We are especially grateful to the Kennedy family. The history of the center and its work and our conversations with David and Lenora and their family go back a good while. Their financial generosity, and the financial generosity of many of you, as their friends and as friends of BYU, have finally made this physical setting for an already important academic function on this campus a reality. We are delighted to have everyone here, especially the VIPs who have been introduced. We suggest that all of you, for your warm and wonderful support of BYU, are VIPs.

When I became president of the university, now half a dozen years ago, it seemed to

me that it was incumbent upon us in some increasing state of maturity, to choose what we could do and to do that well. I did not think we could do everything. We have a fixed number of resources, and only so many people, buildings, and dollars. It just seemed very important to progressively and increasingly choose, refine, magnify, and capitalize on natural abilities and strengths, things that BYU could do well. Some things any university has to do. Some things Brigham Young University has to do, largely because of our religious heritage and our Latter-day Saint sponsorship. Then moving outside that, there are some things that a good university could do, maybe should do, if it can find a way to do them.

One of the things that I thought we ought to do, and certainly there were many before my arrival on campus who also thought so, was to capitalize on what may be the most unique international and cross-cultural strength in an undergraduate population at any university, I think, maybe on this planet. I hope that is not hyperbole; I think it is true.

To demonstrate one aspect of that strength, we have 13,000 returned missionaries on this campus, men and women, who have spent two years, or near that figure, somewhere else in the world. Two-thirds of those 13,000 have a second language capability. A third of them have third language capability. It is not often that folks from Delta or Kanab or St. George or Scipio end up in Indonesia or Johannesburg or Oslo or Osaka. To have those students come back onto this campus, with something like a hundred returned mission presidents, seems to me to give per square inch probably the greatest concentration of international and cross-cultural experience that I could imagine in any comparable university anywhere in the world. That is not the only reason that we are interested in such matters, but it is a natural strength. It seems to me that we would be foolish not to use and to expand upon and to bless those same countries and kingdoms and peoples and languages with the work of the university. We want to support that kind of rather remarkable human experience which so many of our people have had and will continue to have.

It was in that spirit that we began to talk seriously about a center for international studies. That was about the time we began to talk to Brother Kennedy, and certainly the great work of Stan A. Taylor, Ray C. Hillam, and Spencer J. Palmer, several college deans, and a host of others, all working under the able direction of academic vice president and provost, Jae R. Ballif, have now made this a reality.

Two years ago, we officially inaugurated the center. We had a great day in the Tanner Building, brother Kennedy will remember, but we did not have a home. The work of the center was spread out over three or four or five buildings on campus. But we are delighted now that some twenty-four months later we are able to gather here in this lovely historic, and now newly renovated building on campus, and to have the activities of the David M. Kennedy Center brought under one central roof, very much in

the center of this campus. I do not know that you could measure east and west and north and south, but this would be close to the very center of this campus, and I hope there is some significance to that for our future Intercultural Outreach.

This probably will not come to be known as the center of the universe, but it might, Brother Kennedy. We will at least extend that invitation to Brother Hillam and his associates to make it so. We hope and believe and already understand and anticipate that into this building will walk international figures of significant public and private performance, those who have made and shaped world opinion and who have made their own contribution to our international understanding, and will yet do so. Out of the building we hope will come many, many students and certainly a great many publications that will that will explore issues of international understanding, communication, and peace.

Just to note the movement on and off this campus, which we hope this building will symbolize, I think it is not inappropriate to announce that on Friday, 8 November the David M. Kennedy Center will host Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger. He will deliver a public lecture here at BYU, and we invite all of you to be with us on that occasion. We hope this is simply representative of the many kinds of visits and visitors who will come to our campus.

We express appreciation to the Board of Trustees who so unfailingly, absolutely faithfully, support us in the kinds of recommendations and proposals we take. It requires a certain amount of money to sustain and maintain and pursue the mission of this campus, and we could not hope to have had more support for this project, or for any other, than we get from our Board of Trustees, those representatives from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We are grateful that Elder and Sister Faust have been invited to represent them here today. We thank you Elder Faust and ask you to thank your associates and brethren for the improvements that now make this building a reality for us.

We thank Broderick and Howell Construction, and all others who have made this such a wonderfully appointed and beautiful building. We hope you will come back this afternoon for an open house and enjoy the warm hospitality that this newly renovated building conveys to you and to me.

I have already expressed and need to reaffirm my love and appreciation for Brother Ballif. It has been under his supervision at the highest level of academic administration of the university that a host of colleges, a number of deans, a wide variety of departments, and a myriad of faculty members have been brought together. Maybe only at BYU can that really be done, I think, as well as it has been done here. I thank Brother Ballif and his associates in the academic vice president's office for the untiring

way in which that has been done, so cordially and so well.

We are committed to international studies; we are committed to international peace and understanding. We believe that BYU has some advantages and natural assets and opportunities about which we do not want to be smug. We certainly have no desire to convey anything that would be patronizing, but only a sense of mission and a sense of commitment to the purposes and opportunities for international peace and strength. Please know that you have our gratitude and admiration and appreciation by virtue of your attendance here this morning and all that you represent in helping us move toward a realization of our goals.

We hope that you will return to this campus often; we hope you will come to this building often—that you will see it as a home-away-from-home whenever you might be able to be in Provo. Come and be with us, counsel us and teach us, improve us, as we try to do the very best job we feel is at the very center of the purposes and strength and mission of Brigham Young University.

No Events