

PICKING UP THE PACE

2007 FALL CONVOCATION

**September 6, 2007
Concert Hall, Fine Arts Building**

Good afternoon, and thank you all for coming. Let me begin by adding my congratulations to our newly promoted and tenured faculty. You all know that cultivating and developing a great faculty is the linchpin in building a great university. The faculty we've recognized on stage today are the cornerstone of UW's future.

This is one of my very favorite campus-wide events: a celebration of our academic efforts and accomplishments and a recommitment to placing our very highest priority on the academic enterprise.

I want to digress just a little here at first. You'll find that part of my talk today will focus on leadership, and there are some folks in this room who deserve our thanks for their leadership on behalf of the University of Wyoming.

The Board of Trustees is with us today. Members of this board take the concept of volunteerism completely over the top. The hours they commit to learning what they must know to make thoughtful decisions and recommendations are legendary—one previous trustee, who happened to be a lawyer, estimated that UW exhausted about a third of her billable hours! It is a real pleasure to work with you on behalf of the university and the state of Wyoming. Will you all please stand and let us give you a hand?

Another group of volunteers who work hand in hand with me and the trustees are the members of the University of Wyoming Foundation Board. These folks are both tenacious and effective in their efforts to raise and manage the funds required to advance UW. And they haven't stopped to take a breath in helping us set yet another record-setting year for fund raising. Will you please stand up and let us thank you?

Thanks also go to our students, faculty, and staff who are the heart and soul of UW. Your excellence defines the quality of our institution.

To say that this is a busy week would be an understatement. In addition to this being the second week of classes, there is a meeting of the UW Board of Trustees, a meeting of the UW Foundation Board, a meeting of the Alumni Association, groundbreaking for the new Information Technology Center, a home

football game, and a news conference on Saturday to announce another historic gift to the university. It's an exciting time, and I'm here today to set the stage for the coming year.

This is my third convocation speech, and I come to it with a real determination to have a quick look at this past year's accomplishments, to give you a sense of my priorities for the future, and to do all that and not be too boring. A big challenge, that last one, but I'll do my best.

First, a quick look at the past year or so:

In my first convocation speech, I described to you the many "piles of dirt" around campus. I hope you've noticed that they've all sprouted wonderful new buildings: the new Anthropology Building is currently occupied, the remodeled Classroom Building is back on line, the convention center is about to be completed, the Indoor Practice Facility is nearly open, and oops...we're getting ready to make some more piles of dirt.

There's a pile of dirt where the Bunkhouse used to be, and soon the new Information Technology Center will grow there. So where will the honors students who lived in the Bunkhouse go? They will move into the remodeled and improved Honors House on 15th and Willett. The old Anthropology Building (or, for you old, old-timers, the old Law School) is coming down to accommodate the \$50 million library addition. The old credit union building is going to be remodeled for the campus police, and the old energy plant on Lewis Street is coming down to make room for the Berry Center for Natural History and Conservation. And I fully expect that we'll be breaking ground on the College of Business expansion and remodel next year.

So, beyond buildings, what's gone on this past year?

Well, additional faculty, salary increases, the School of Energy Resources, deferred maintenance funds, solid funding for medical education, endowed faculty positions, and additional funding for libraries are among the most visible advances, and they result from another unprecedented year of support from the governor and the Wyoming Legislature. And we'll continue to talk with policymakers as we head toward the 2008 budget session. But make no mistake, academics will remain our top priority.

Today, as I speak, the state of Wyoming invests more in higher education on a per capita basis than any other state in the nation. We're filling our state-funded endowed professorships, and I want to celebrate in particular the College of Education's hiring of Dr. Jim Baumann – considered one of the world's foremost scholars in literacy – as the Wyoming Excellence Chair of Literacy Education. I should point out to you that hiring all of these endowed professors is a real

challenge. Outstanding faculty from the best schools in the country are difficult to “steal”—those schools have deep pockets, too, so the competition is fierce.

As Nobel Prize winner Norman Ramsey said to me during a visit to campus more than 20 years ago, “Sometimes when you go hunting for tigers, you come back empty.” Make no mistake, we’re hunting for tigers, and we will not stop until we’ve bagged them all.

We’ve wrestled away from our colleagues to the south the new National Center for Atmospheric Research supercomputer. It will be located just west of Cheyenne, and quite simply, it will be the most powerful computer on the planet. Arguably as important as the computer itself is our new partnership with one of the world’s truly outstanding scientific organizations. Since March, UW and NCAR have already organized scientific workshops, shared a student intern, and cooperated in faculty searches. And we expect the relationship to grow even deeper over the next few years.

It took the determined efforts of the governor, Cheyenne LEADS, the state legislature, the Wyoming Business Council, and UW to put together this amazing coup, and I assure you that this facility and the supporting expertise that we will build around it will place UW among the finest centers for computational science in the world.

We’ve had yet another record-setting year in fund raising. Thirty-nine million dollars is an unprecedented achievement, and it includes the largest single cash gift in the history of UW. Bob and Carol Berry donated \$10 million to establish the Berry Center for Natural History and Conservation—that’s the one that will replace the old energy plant on Lewis Street.

And that \$39 million doesn’t include matching funds from the state! Our governor and legislature have provided us with three matching-fund programs—one for endowments, one for athletics facilities, and, most recently, one for academic facilities. Since the first state matching-fund program was approved in 2001, total state support in all programs approaches \$100 million. UW faculty and staff have once again taken us to a new level of excellence in the research enterprise.

A record was set again this past year with \$72 million in external research awards. More UW researchers received million-dollar awards than ever before. And not only is the total amount of external funding increasing, so too is the number of awards. This achievement reflects the hard work of faculty and staff in an increasingly competitive funding environment.

And let me remind you that it really isn’t the money that’s important. It’s the scholarship and training these funds provide that are the real benefits. The money is just easier to count.

The title I picked for this year's Fall Convocation speech is "Picking up the Pace." I can hear you say, "What? Are you crazy, Buchanan?" That's a legitimate question, I'll admit, in light of what's gone on the past several years. Here is my rationale.

The state of Wyoming doesn't invest huge amounts in UW because there is a lot of money to spend. Having financial resources helps, of course—but it's not the reason for the investment. Wyoming's policymakers—whether in Cheyenne or in our smallest communities—recognize that Wyoming's greatest natural resource is a well-educated population.

The people of Wyoming demand excellence in public higher education, and they continue to support investments to achieve it. Our responsibility here at the university is simple to describe but a tremendous challenge to accomplish. We must meet the demands of our citizens for excellence at UW. We have been given the tools, and we will deliver. I stress the word "we" because I need your help.

Each of you has a role to play—the University of Wyoming won't be successful without your commitment and support.

I'll begin with an easy assignment. I used to tease Jacque that she could quickly give me the "worst case scenario" for almost any initiative or idea. Maybe it's the high altitude or the wind, but it seems to me that we tend too frequently to put a negative spin on things. We live in a great state, we have a great university, we have unparalleled support from all of our constituencies including our state government, we have amazing people governing and supporting UW, we actually live in a place where most people want to vacation, and things simply could not be more positive. So, that's the first way you can help move UW up yet another notch: let's all just brag about it, at any and every opportunity we have. Having exciting challenges ahead shouldn't prevent us from celebrating the successes we've already achieved and tackling whatever barriers seem to stand in our way.

We've talked for years about moving UW up to the next level. Well, I believe that we've arrived at that next level, and now's the time to continue the upward momentum. There are some specific places where we need to push.

First, let's talk about access. We all know that access refers to the concept of keeping higher education readily available to those who are ready and able. Across the country, average people are finding the cost of higher education accelerating away from their reach. But not here—Wyoming is different. Wyoming has the Hathaway Scholarship Program. Nearly all of our traditional-aged resident freshmen here at UW have a Hathaway Scholarship.

And the Hathaway program is working. In 1999, Wyoming had 7,000 high school graduates. In 2007, we had only 5,700 grads, a decrease of 19 percent. But UW's 2007 freshman class had more Wyoming grads than the 1999 freshman class! We're persuading a greater percentage of Wyoming students to go to college, but

still, far too many of our high school graduates do not pursue postsecondary education at all.

Regardless of our success increasing those numbers, the Wyoming workforce pipeline is filled with a shrinking number of traditional-aged high school graduates simply because of our demographics. We should not put all of our workforce eggs in a shrinking basket! And that unprecedented support that education is receiving from the state? Well it's grounded in a growing economy that will require a larger and better educated workforce as it diversifies and grows.

Our responsibility to provide that well-educated workforce goes way beyond our responsibility to educate Wyoming newly minted high school graduates— to think otherwise would be naïve.

I want to take a broader look.

As we speak, 40 percent of all UW students are non-traditional, and at the community colleges that number is 43 percent. When I say non-traditional, I mean older students coming back to school to work on or to complete degree programs; single parents looking for a way to provide a better life for themselves and their families; high school graduates who took a few years to “find themselves” and now want to find themselves in college; or people who want to earn a college degree but are site-bound. The cost of attending college is usually very challenging for these students, and we can be confident that there are many more potential non-traditional students out there for whom the cost of attendance is simply prohibitive.

Wyoming took a bold step in creating the Hathaway programs for new high school graduates. It can, and should, take another bold step by establishing a program to include residents of all ages who understand education can build better lives and a better future for Wyoming. I am committed to working with our community college colleagues and state policymakers to achieve that end.

We Wyomingites like to think that we're somehow different. One way that we truly are different is that we value and support higher education more than anyplace else...if you happen to be graduating from high school. With our wealth comes the ability to better care for all Wyomingites. Now is the time to extend the Hathaway program to include postsecondary students of all ages. Whether it is a degree from UW, a community college program, or an accredited technical program, we need to fill that workforce pipeline with learners of all kinds.

It shouldn't be about being the right age. It should be about building a better future. Let me be clear. If we really believe we're somehow different from every other state and every other university, we can prove it. The ability to make higher

education affordable for all Wyoming citizens is within our reach, and, simply, we should do it.

Higher education access isn't just about tuition and fees. At UW, we've talked at length about our campus housing. Fifty-year-old residence halls need renovation, but simply raising housing fees to pay for it will raise the costs to students. How much is reasonable? Students should have some "skin in the game" when it comes to their education, but we shouldn't "skin them alive."

It is time to stop talking and start doing. We need a comprehensive housing plan—one that recognizes that housing costs, while affordable for some students, can be prohibitive for others. We must make clear the university's housing responsibilities to freshmen to help promote their academic success; for international students who are making a huge transition; and for others as well. And we need to translate that into an appropriate mix of residence halls and apartments. We also have to recognize the changing housing market here in Laramie and communicate with those who provide off-campus housing to so many of our students. Finally, we must develop a workable plan to make it happen at an affordable cost to students. And...wait for it...it is time to get rid of the barracks.

There's more. We need to increase our efforts to take the University of Wyoming out into the state. There's a four-year higher education institution in every community...it's the University of Wyoming. Our outreach programs are outstanding, and they are all over the state. Our relationships with the state's community colleges have never been better. We've recently concluded conversations with Laramie County Community College that we hope and expect will result in a UW building on the LCCC campus. Talks are also underway for a new building on the Casper College campus, where UW already has faculty members and degree programs.

I've met with the boards of trustees at LCCC and Casper College, and I'm scheduled to meet with the boards of every other Wyoming community college this fall. No other president in the university's history has ever done so, and it's long overdue. I am determined that we will take our university out to the state with more vigor and more resources than ever. Now is the time to make the "reach" part of "outreach" a little shorter.

Let me turn to *leadership* in the context of "picking up the pace."

First, in education. Just two weeks ago we announced, with our public and private partners, the establishment of a statewide P-16 coordinating council—an initiative that we've been working on for several years. I expect a more seamless education for all Wyoming students and certainly a higher percentage of students going on to college. UW will continue to take the lead in making it happen.

Next, in health care. As Wyoming's most extensive source of clinical education, and as the state's largest provider of health care to uninsured and underinsured, UW must take a leadership role in helping solve the health-care problems confronting Wyoming, other rural areas, and indeed the country. A clinical education plan in the College of Health Sciences is a natural first step toward a broader conversation about the health-care workforce throughout the state. To bolster this effort, I am pleased to announce that former Trustee and Wyoming physician Dr. Jerry Saunders will help guide this important initiative.

Among the critical issues are greater coordination of UW's physician training efforts in the WWAMI and WICHE programs; forging links between these programs and UW's family practice residencies in Casper and Cheyenne; more effective use of clinical training opportunities in all of our health-care disciplines on and near the Laramie campus; and the exploration of an interdisciplinary mental health collaboration involving faculty members from the Colleges of Health Sciences, Arts and Sciences, and Education.

Energy...of course you knew this topic was coming. With the arrival of Dr. Mark Northam as the director of the School of Energy Resources, you can expect even more good news as we continue to advance one of the most significant new enterprises at UW in decades. This effort has been at the forefront of many discussions this past year, so I don't want to make it the centerpiece of today's talk—I just want to remind you that we are well underway, and to watch for an important announcement regarding the effort this weekend. I also want to mention our expectation that our School of Energy Resources will do work relevant to Wyoming's vast energy resources. That portfolio has to include the renewable energy resources that are so abundant here, in addition to coal, oil, gas, and uranium. We are already deeply involved in enhanced oil recovery, carbon sequestration, coalbed methane, and the science needed to manage their environmental implications.

Currently we are in the midst of discussions with General Electric Corporation about the placement of a small-scale GE gasifier, perhaps at the Western Research Institute's Advanced Technology Center, where – in partnership with GE and the state of Wyoming – we will demonstrate technologies and perform research associated with gasification of Powder River Basin coal and use of the synthetic gas that is produced. This is a tremendous opportunity not just for the university, but for the entire state.

I want to urge us all to push the energy envelope a little further. To be a truly responsive institution, we will need to integrate our academic efforts with UW's daily operations, apply the principles of energy-efficient architecture to our building plans, adopt sustainable business practices such as recycling, and incorporate advanced energy technologies into our central energy plant.

In natural resources, both the Ruckelshaus Institute and the Haub School for Environment and Natural Resources will continue to provide leadership in addressing issues central to our state and region, particularly regarding the resources that are affected by minerals production. With water issues so critical, we will be requesting funding from the legislature this coming year for a senior-level professorship in water resources which will contribute to the Haub School and help unify UW's broad-based expertise in this area.

Although energy and environmental quality have polarized the Rocky Mountain West for decades, it is time for us to recognize that they are inextricably linked. It is my expectation—and that of the state's political leaders—that the Ruckelshaus Institute and the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources will continue to work closely with the School of Energy Resources to provide leadership in building consensus regarding the management of our treasured environment and the use of Wyoming's remarkable natural resources.

Our College of Business is moving ahead rapidly in the areas of entrepreneurship and ethics. And our Office of Research and Economic Development has exhibited extraordinary initiative in shaping Wyoming's business environment. We need to cultivate effective links among these efforts.

The Wyoming Technology Business Center—you know it as the “incubator”—already provides high-quality technology business experiences for business students. I want to urge us to have an even more energetic approach.

The business faculty, the incubator, and the statewide outreach initiatives in Vice President Bill Gern's office must work in concert to foster a more diverse state economy, to promote better paying career opportunities, and to train the entrepreneurs who can help build the future foundations of our communities.

Before I leave the topic of leadership, I want to acknowledge the university's Executive Council, our deans, directors, department heads, faculty and staff senates, and ASUW. These people all provide essential leadership for our university. I know we all chuckle when we refer to faculty moving into administration as “going over to the dark side,” but in all seriousness, I hope to persuade you that taking a leadership role in your institution is critical to its success, and UW's success is your job.

If universities are to draw their academic leaders from the faculty—and I'd argue that this tradition is a core element of faculty governance—professors must be willing and ready to rise to the challenge. Being a department head is one of the most effective ways for an exemplary teacher and scholar to move his or her department to that next level. So step up. It will take you out of your comfort zone. It will require you to face some unusual challenges. But you will make a difference—and you may even enjoy it.

Now to *excellence*. While we have an ambitious agenda this year, it will also be a year of intensive planning...don't groan. Our previous plans and their successful implementation are the bases for the confidence that policymakers and the public have in UW.

We will be initiating Strategic Planning III this year, including the third iteration of the Academic Plan and the integration of our support services and capital facilities plans. We will be in our self-study year for overall institutional reaccreditation by the Higher Learning Commission, which many of you knew formerly as the North Central Association. The Department of Intercollegiate

Athletics will be up for NCAA reaccreditation, which will include a Title IX compliance audit. The College of Education will pursue reaccreditation from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, and the

College of Business will be gearing up for review by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. These processes are time-consuming, and you should expect to be called on to contribute. There is no doubt about "picking up the pace" in this arena.

It is my very firm belief that our success—both politically and academically—is the result of effective planning and credible follow-through, and all of these

studies are planning elements. I know that self-studies and audits sometimes don't feel like much more than never-ending self-examinations, but their results give us measurable ways to determine our progress toward our goals. It's not enough to say that we have an excellent university—we must be able to prove it. So, I ask for your patience and your best efforts during this study year. We ensure our excellence when we frequently measure it.

Speaking of planning, our east campus is a challenge for all of us, and we will be picking up the pace in our planning efforts there as well. I am directing our senior staff to prepare a master plan for our east campus and to engage

the university community and Laramie in developing the plan. The plan must address a variety of challenges: How will new fine arts facilities expand into adjacent areas of campus? How will the vision for university housing fit into

the east campus? How will parking change and expand over time on the east campus? What areas will we set aside for athletics, intramural sports, and other recreational uses, including our valuable relationship with the City of Laramie? Should we expand the business incubator? Should UW someday establish a research park? How will we combine our research and education missions with

the modernization of our Central Energy Plant? UW must demonstrate leadership in the technology we use to generate energy for our campus and in the way we manage it.

One place where all of this introspection really does reveal a move toward excellence at UW is in the area of diversity. We now look beyond simple head counts to include longitudinal assessments of student diversity, documentation

of successes and failures at attracting and retaining a diverse faculty, heightened awareness of fair employment practices, review of salary structures in salary raise processes, and enhanced showcasing of diversity in university-wide cultural

and intellectual events. And we can do more. We do have a moral and ethical obligation to steward an institution that ensures open and available higher education to all segments of society. We must do this by providing an accessible path to leadership that is open to talented and qualified individuals of every race and ethnicity—students, faculty, and staff. And we must do this if we are to cultivate future leaders with legitimacy in the eyes of an increasingly diverse professional world.

I want to pick up the pace this year in building broader excellence in science and technology. As a partner in building a world-class supercomputer facility, UW has newfound opportunities for scientific prominence that are nothing short of extraordinary. Many people now regard computational science as the third mode of science, complementing the traditional modes of theory and experiment. Capitalizing on these opportunities will require many disciplines—engineering, life sciences, energy sciences, agriculture, natural resources, the physical and mathematical sciences, and the earth sciences—to take a fresh look at the array of expertise needed to provide students and, indeed, faculty with the tools they need for the future. We have an unprecedented opportunity to move UW into the highest tier of universities in computational science, and I believe that we will do just that.

Let's pick up the pace in the arts. UW is Wyoming's natural hub for the fine and performing arts and creative endeavors in the humanities. We have extraordinary talent in these areas. Just a few of my favorite pieces of evidence are the Vertical Dance performances; our fabulous theatre productions; amazing success by our students in the annual Kennedy Center competition; the annual juried student art show; the summer dance festival; our cultural program performances; and an ongoing musical smorgasbord from Bach to rock. The arts and humanities are such an important part of all of our lives, and the fine and performing arts on campus, in particular, need new facilities and more support. We must vigorously pursue funding for competitive fine arts facilities and explore avenues for broader cultural outreach...not only in the Laramie area, but throughout the state and region.

A word about picking up the pace in athletics. Well, we expect to be competitive in our league in every sport. As the Cowgirls showed us this past year, Wyoming fans want us to win, and they want us to do it with class. And when we win, they come in droves, and when they come, what a show! Tom Burman and his team are fixing to make that happen; we saw it last Saturday and we'll see it again this Saturday in the game against Utah State. And I hope to see every one of you in War Memorial cheering the Cowboys on.

We need to pick up the pace in the way we communicate about UW. I'm committed to restoring and maintaining long-standing UW traditions. We are just delighted that we've re-established our historic relationship with the Alumni Association. But we also have a new and exciting story to tell, and we need to re-energize our message, and we need to reframe the way we tell it. And we will.

Just last week, an editorial in one of our state newspapers criticized some folks here at UW for downplaying our lackluster ranking by the *U.S. News and World Report* in their annual publication. The criticism was inaccurate because it failed to recognize that the rankings in question take scant account of mission and outcomes—the very aspects of our university of which we are justifiably proudest. The editorial was “spot on,” however, in its bigger message. Now is not the time to be satisfied.

Just a few years ago, who would have envisioned that our institutional plans would have yielded a School of Energy Resources, an NCAR supercomputer, Hathaway Scholarships, endowed faculty positions, extraordinary new facilities, amazing private support, a record-breaking research enterprise, a strong statewide presence, and increasingly outstanding faculty and students. The university community, and that includes all of you, needs to help share that story with the state and the nation in new and creative ways.

Still, as you all know, there's a lot of work left to be done. So join me in “picking up the pace” at the University of Wyoming.

And now, I invite all of you to join me and the Board of Trustees in the Fine Arts Lobby, where I hope you will share with us your reactions, your aspirations, and your vision for the future of this great university.

Thank you for coming.