

State of the University Address
Thursday, September 15, 3:00 p.m.
Union Ballroom

Good afternoon! Thank you, Provost Miller, and welcome to the University of Wyoming as our new Provost. I also want to extend a special welcome to the Trustees who are with us today. And in the event that you have not yet met my husband, Tim, I would like to introduce you to him, and wish him a happy birthday today.

Congratulations to our newly promoted faculty members. Becoming tenured and/or promoted are major milestones in one's academic career, and I congratulate you on this achievement.

Finally, let me extend a special welcome to our new faculty who, like me, have joined the university this summer. We are thrilled to have you as part of the University community. I hope you will love it here and that this will be a place where you find colleagues and administrators who will support you, so you can excel in your career.

The start of the academic year is such an exciting time on a university campus. One can feel the energy as we welcome new faculty and students who are joining us for the first time; and welcome back faculty and students who may have been away during the summer, many of whom were engaged in intense summer research, internships, international travel, and hopefully some down time with loved ones too.

The campus has been busy preparing for the fall semester for several months, and it was exciting for me to participate in the University's opening events including welcoming the class of 2020 at Cowboy Connection. Tim and I also hosted the all campus picnic a few days later, which was attended by well over 1,800 people. It was a beautiful afternoon with great food, music, and fun. Then, there was the Cowboy Kickoff concert featuring Kip Moore and that unforgettable football game—my first as president—when the Cowboys, despite the torrential rain, lightning, three overtimes, and a 2:30 A.M. finish time, brought home the win.

In some ways, I feel like a freshman again as I experience my first academic year at UW. I am delighted to be a part of this wonderful university.

Tomorrow will mark four months since I became the University of Wyoming's 26th president. Much has happened during that relatively short time. A major focus has been for me to meet and get to know the university and the state. I have visited over 15 Wyoming communities, every community college, met with about 55 department or units on campus thus far, and hosted several town hall meetings.

To begin, I would like to review some of the accomplishments that have happened since President McGinity spoke to you on this occasion last fall, and while I'm at it, let me thank Dick for his kindness and support during the Presidential transition.

A very significant change to the university's general studies program was implemented and is now in its second academic year. A key component of this revision is the first-year seminar, in which freshmen engage with some of the university's top teachers to learn what college is all about. These are intriguing, important, and fun courses covering a wide range of topics—from the Anthropology of Monsters, to Feeding the Planet, to the Beauty and Joy of Computing, to Superheroes in Popular Culture, just to name a few.

UW Faculty achievements abound, and I asked each dean to provide me one of their college's best faculty accomplishments this past year. And faculty, as I read about you, if you are here, would you stand so we can see you and recognize you? This is truly an impressive list. And while time today only allows me to recognize a handful of you individually, know that I do so as representative of the broader work of the faculty who are truly bringing Wyoming's land grant mission to life every day.

In the College of Education, Dr. Ana How-seal defines her research as *examining education at the edge of change*. She uses this lens to guide her work with teachers who are developing a newly aligned *Next Generation Science Standards*-based curriculum in Gillette, Wyoming. This grant-funded work has garnered national press in the past year, including a feature in *U.S. News and World Report*. Further, her work has changed how the *National Park Service* is leveraging education as a vehicle to celebrate the Centennial of our nation's system of national parks and craft a vision looking forward to the next century. Along the way, Ana has published extensively in top tier journals.

From the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Professor Steve Ford of Animal Science just received the, “Abraham Lincoln Honor Award,” from US Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. This is the highest award given from the USDA. Professor Ford is receiving this award for his role on a team that provided review, evaluation, and preparation of a new guiding document on animal care and well-being for the Agriculture Research Service (ARS).

In Arts and Sciences, Assistant Professor Ellen Currano, from the Departments of Botany and Geology and Geophysics, has published 10 peer-reviewed research papers, secured close to \$1,000,000 in research funding in just five years, and has established a highly functioning laboratory. Ellen studies the history of the earth through analysis of fossil plants. Her NSF-Career award includes being cofounder of *The Bearded Lady Project: Challenging the Face of Science*, a documentary film and photography project that explores stereotypes of what a field scientist looks like.

Professor Penne Ainsworth was recognized by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) by being awarded the Accounting Educator of the Year. Only one educator is selected each year, nationwide, for excellence in teaching and national prominence in the accounting profession. Dr. Ainsworth serves as Chair of the Accounting Department in the College of Business at UW and is noted for being a strong role model to faculty.

Since joining the College of Health Sciences faculty in 2010, Dr. Christine Porter has received over \$8 million in federal grant funding, nearly all for her action research with Wyoming communities working to build healthy and secure food systems. Since 2011, she has led the *Food Dignity* project, and last year, building on Food Dignity work with Wind River Indian Reservation partners, she secured an NIH R01 grant for the *Growing Resilience* project. She will work with 100 Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho families over the next five years. This will be the first-ever randomized controlled trial on the health impacts of gardens.

About two years ago, Civil Engineering Professor Fred Ogden of the College of Engineering and Applied Science discovered an entirely new solution to the flow of water through soils. That solution is now being incorporated by Professor Ogden and his students into a supercomputing hydrological simulation for the National Weather Service. Professor Ogden is traveling to France in two weeks to receive an award for this discovery from the International Association of Hydrogeologists.

In the Haub School, Dr. Steve Smutko assisted the Western Governors Association and Governor Matt Mead to design and facilitate robust, bipartisan conversations around improvements to state species conservation activities and the Endangered Species Act. The goal of this project is to suggest pathways for states to operate as authentic partners in the Act's implementation.

The College of Law's International Human Rights Clinic Professors Noah Novogrodsky and Suzie Pritchett supported a major human rights decision by the Ugandan Supreme Court on behalf of women's rights in Uganda. In Uganda, 17 women a day die in childbirth due to obstructed labor and lack of adequate prenatal care, medicine, and doctors to perform C-sections. The Supreme Court's decision, supported by the faculty and

students of UW's clinic, identified maternal mortality as a pressing human rights issue and acknowledged the consequences of a system that currently fails thousands of women each year. Professors Novogrodsky and Pritchett are working with local counsel in Africa to produce an appellate brief, which ultimately will persuade Uganda's highest court of the importance of women's health and human rights under the Ugandan Constitution.

Assistant Professor Dario Grana of the School of Energy Resources and Department of Geology and Geophysics is in demand internationally as a speaker, with 14 invited presentations across the U.S. and in Europe. Dr. Grana is the recipient of several major professional awards, including in 2016 the Karcher Award from the Society of Exploration Geophysicists, the Anadarko Fellowship for Excellence in Energy, and, with colleagues from Stanford, received the 2014 ENI Award for New Frontiers of Hydrocarbons in Rome from the president of Italy. Congratulations.

Finally, Phi Beta Kappa has been identifying and celebrating excellence in the liberal arts at the best colleges and universities across the nation for more than 200 years. Those same liberal arts are alive today in Wyoming. A year ago at the national society's Triennial

Council, The UW Phi Beta Kappa chapter was recognized as the nation's outstanding chapter in a public institution.

Would you help me in commending these outstanding faculty and UW's award winning chapter of Phi Beta Kappa?

Our campus is ever-changing and on the facilities front, four new, beautifully remodeled or constructed buildings were completed in the past year, enhancing the student experience—and the faculty experience, too. Indeed, place matters.

- A century after it opened as a women's dormitory, Hoyt Hall now has a modern interior to better serve the students and faculty in the Department of English, the Department of Modern and Classical Languages, and the Creative Writing Program.
- The renovated and expanded Buchanan Center for the Performing Arts provides remarkable performance and rehearsal spaces for our talented music, theater and dance students. I must say one of the highlights of my summer was attending the Snowy Range Repertory Theatre at the Buchanan Center.

- The Half Acre Recreation and Wellness Center is now one of the premier student recreation centers in the nation, and it is loved by students and those who use it.
- And the Michael B. Enzi STEM Facility opened its doors, providing state-of-the-art laboratory and instructional spaces for the thousands of students in our freshman- and sophomore-level science courses.

As we lift up these facility projects, we do so with clear understanding that these aren't just impressive buildings, but places that can inspire us to teach, to learn, and to serve in transformative, new ways.

The university's efforts to improve the experience for students transferring from Wyoming's community colleges have been underway for several years, and major progress was made this past year. I want to take this opportunity to personally thank Alyson Hagy and Patrice Noel for their wonderful work in this area.

Due to the efforts of many across campus and around the state, we now have about 150 2+2 program-level articulation agreements for 35 of the highest demand academic programs for transfer students. These 150 agreements impact more than 70% of UW's incoming transfer students.

I made it a point to visit all of the state's community colleges this summer, and I am committed to building on the progress that has been made so far. I am told that another articulation summit will take place later this month with our community college partners where work continues on more than 50 additional agreements. I also plan to meet with the community college presidents in October.

I believe community college transfer students will become an even more important part of our enrollment picture of the future. Beyond that, UW must play a significant role in increasing the number of Wyoming citizens who hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Currently Wyoming ranks #44 with only 22.5% of the population holding this level of education.

It will be critical to Wyoming's future to increase this percentage to at least the national average of 30%—and increasing nearly 8% will take hard work and shared

commitment. A natural starting point is to more effectively partner with our sister community colleges and move associate degree students through a four-year degree completion.

Research and scholarship are a critical part of our mission. Vice President Gern tells me last year was an outstanding year in external funding for research with \$95 million in external awards; and \$98 million in award expenditures. In addition, 650 grant proposals were submitted. This is a true credit to the outstanding work of many faculty members. Our current NSF EPSCoR grant is in its final year so on August 2 a new NSF EPSCoR grant was submitted by a team of faculty for \$20 million. This grant addresses the grand challenge of predicting how the diversity of microbes impacts ecological processes, goods and services by measuring them across the steep environmental gradients of Wyoming. Congratulations to all the faculty who contributed to these accomplishments and thanks to Dr. Gern for his leadership.

Likewise, the UW Foundation reported a record \$63.1 million private giving for the past fiscal year. It's been my pleasure to meet with the Foundation Board, staff, and donors across the state since my arrival in May. This record-breaking gift total is a tremendous accomplishment, and I congratulate Vice President Blalock and everyone associated with reaching that total.

Part of that record \$63.1 million total is the \$4.5 million grant from the Daniels Fund, announced in December, to launch the Trustees Education Initiative. This is in addition to a \$500,000 planning grant from the Daniels Fund. As you know, this is the start of a major effort to lift educator preparation programs in our College of Education to national pre-eminence, graduating talented teachers and other educators for Wyoming's schools.

Also in the past year, there has been significant progress on the university's two other major initiatives: the Tier-1 Engineering Initiative and the Top-Tier Science Initiative.

Under the leadership of Dean Pishko, the Tier-1 Engineering Initiative is progressing with new faculty hires, recruitment of outstanding students, construction of the High Bay Research Facility, and construction of the

new Engineering Education and Research Building beginning next month.

The Science Initiative, an interdisciplinary effort involving several departments has strong research and instructional components. I'm excited about the focus on improving the experience for undergraduate students through active learning.

These are exciting projects that will have significant, positive impacts on the university and the state. They will improve our student experience, boost the university's reputation and contribute to the university's role in serving as an intellectual and economic driver for Wyoming.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to highlight the academic achievements of our student-athletes, who, led by Women's Soccer and Men's Golf, achieved their highest all sport cumulative grade point average on record, a 3.086. Keeping all these achievements in mind, it's clear the state of our university is strong.

Now, a few words on the budget.

I am pleased to report that we have fully met our goal of \$19.3 million in reductions for the current fiscal year. This has largely been accomplished by eliminating 102 vacant positions, and offering a retirement and separation incentive that resulted in 67 additional positions. All together we have reduced our number of employees by 214 to this point.

Other strategies to realize this budget reduction involved hiring fewer adjunct and part-time faculty this fall, and reducing benefits paid to part-time employees. While there are down sides to every one of these strategies, the positives include that we avoided layoffs, kept operating and support budget intact, and provided the courses and services needed by students this fall.

I want to say a very sincere thank you to every one of you who worked tirelessly to make this happen in a very short time. And I also want to say thank you for your support to me during these challenging months. Your words of encouragement and incredible cooperation have made all the difference.

Now we are focused on achieving an additional \$15 million reduction for the 2018 fiscal year. As provided for under university regulations, a Financial Crisis Advisory Committee is advising me in crafting a reduction plan that also will include some revenue enhancements that are being finalized by another group---the revenue enhancement committee. Work is progressing and I will present a reduction plan to the Board of Trustees in November. Again, I want to pause and thank both of these groups...FCAC under the leadership of Dr. Steve Bieber, and Revenue Enhancement under the leadership of Dr. Rob Godby...for their tireless work all summer and into the fall. They have been incredible and truthfully, I couldn't do this work without them. I'd like to ask members of both groups to stand so we can thank them for their efforts.

I can assure all of you that every effort is being expended to continue placing the quality of academic programs as a high priority, and maintain our commitment to our students and their success. Our goal has been to keep the focus on our core mission of teaching, research and service, while becoming a more streamlined, nimble and efficient institution.

The work by Huron is part of the university's move to a new financial reporting, budgeting and human resources system approved by the Board of Trustees this year. Some have questioned the wisdom of such an expensive, extensive undertaking while we're reducing the budget, but as I have said before, this is something we cannot afford to delay. This is a long-overdue upgrade, and we cannot run this university effectively or efficiently without it.

So finally, on to my last topic, and one that I am most excited by—that of creating our future.

We will soon launch work on a new strategic plan for the university, even as difficult budget decisions are being made. I hope you have read the news releases and know that the entire university community will have an opportunity to participate in developing our next 5-year strategic plan. This involves the creation of a Strategic Planning Leadership Council; campus wide dialogue and listening sessions; statewide meetings; opportunities for the campus community to comment on the plan; and approval of the plan through UW's governance structures. I invite you all to be a part of this process, starting with the kickoff event one week from tomorrow, Friday, Sept. 23, at 3 p.m. at the Marian H. Rochelle Gateway Center.

The keynote speaker will be King Alexander, president of Louisiana State University, who has faced many challenges, yet provided outstanding leadership to the LSU system. And by the way, he is brother to our own Dean Klint Alexander. We will also introduce the Strategic Planning Leadership Council, headed by Provost Miller. The Council will provide overarching leadership through the process and draft the plan.

I led two strategic planning efforts in my previous job, and I can tell you that if we do it right, this process will provide a unified, roadmap for UW to achieve new levels of excellence in the years to come. It is indeed possible for an institution to go through reductions of the magnitude we face and emerge in a favorable position as a result of prioritization and innovative thinking.

Provost Miller and her leadership council are leading this effort, and it would be improper for me to influence the process to a great extent, but there are a number of issues I expect the strategic plan to address.

First, we must find ways to grow the university's enrollment. Our numbers have been flat for several years and soon we will release fall enrollment which appears to be down slightly. This must be turned around as it is important that we be producing more graduates, not less, and beyond that we must become more self-reliant, financially. Developing enrollment goals that fall within our current capacity, and then putting in place a strong enrollment management plan addressing recruitment and retention, will be essential in the next several years. One part of that infrastructure needed to grow enrollment is improving residence halls. These aging, dormitory-style high-rises might have been fine when they were built 50 or so years ago, but they are not competitive in the marketplace right now. We will be developing a plan to replace them with innovative, modern, living-learning structures as soon as possible.

Second, we must look at our tuition and fees. Because of the commitment of the state's elected leaders, our resident undergraduate tuition and fees are by far the lowest in the country, and our nonresident tuition is among the lowest. Even with modest increases, we will still offer a high value at an incredibly affordable price. As you know, we're also looking at differentiated program fees for certain high-cost, high-overhead programs. I expect that

to be part of the plan we present to the Board of Trustees in November, but a long-term tuition strategy must be part of the university's overall plan.

Quite frankly, that's in part because we must rely less on the Legislature and the governor for operational funding increases. We must diversify, and expand revenue streams. And in this diversification mix is enhanced private support through fundraising. I will spend a significant portion of my schedule on fundraising, and it will also be a high priority for our deans and other administrators. I anticipate working with the Foundation on a significant fundraising campaign to implement our strategic plan when it's completed next semester.

Increasing the university's commitment to diversity also is high on my priority list. Soon we will be recruiting a Chief Diversity Officer, to provide overarching leadership to our campus, and plans are taking shape to enhance our support to American Indian students—both current and future---when they arrive on our campus. You might remember when I interviewed, I talked about my philosophy that “diversity starts at home” and I am committed to work with the Wind River reservation and both the Shoshone and Arapahoe tribes to improve opportunities for tribal students.

And there is so much more...international, faculty recruitment and retention including salaries, research support, student success, an enhanced honor's program...the list goes on.

In spite of the challenges facing Wyoming, I remain optimistic for the university and the state's education system. Higher education is critical to Wyoming's future, because our graduates are the people who will drive the innovations for the state's key industries; develop new ideas and businesses to diversify the state's economy; and assure that Wyoming remains a great place to live, work, play and raise families.

Last December, before our current budget woes, I accepted the position of president because it seemed that the University of Wyoming had a bright future. Believe it or not, after four months on the job, I feel even more strongly that our shared future is indeed bright. I am confident we will emerge from this difficult time as an even stronger, more focused institution.

My optimism rests in part on the visits I had with people as I traveled around the state this summer, as well as the many department and unit visits with many of you here on campus. The common theme of all of those interactions has been affection for and pride in the university, along

with talented, ambitious faculty, stakeholders who are 100% behind this university, and bright students who come here to learn and grow. There is a clear expectation that we deliver on our land-grant mission of access, quality education, research to stimulate the economy, and service to the state, nation, and world.

I know during challenging times it is easy to get down, and to see everything in terms of what's wrong. One of my inspirations in these past months has been the late Wilma Mankiller—the first female chief of the Cherokee nation who wrote:

“A positive outlook is the greatest attribute a leader can possess. I begin my prayers with a request that all negative thoughts be removed from my mind.”

I've often thought, too, of another Cherokee story that goes like this:

One evening, a Cherokee elder told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, “My son, the battle is between two wolves inside us all.

One is **Evil**—It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

The other is **Good**—it is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.”

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked: “Grandfather, which wolf wins?”

The old Cherokee simply replied, “The one you feed.”

So, I ask you today, that each of us chooses to feed the good wolf. Let’s focus on the many positives and our University’s great potential, so that together, we build an even stronger university.

Thank you for your commitment, and for all that you do on behalf of the University of Wyoming.

I look forward to working with you in the years ahead. And I wish for each of you, a rich, fulfilling academic year.