

President Hensrud's Fall Startup Breakfast Remarks – August 21, 2018

Thank you, Dr. Peffer -- and thank *you all* for being here this morning.

Boozhoo -- *welcome* -- to all our new employees, and welcome everyone to the start of the 2018-19 academic year. It is wonderful to be with all of you again.

Summers in Bemidji are always the most special time of the year. We can enjoy time with families and friends, and focus on projects, professional development, or research. Summer is also the time when we prepare to welcome a new group of students, as well as those who are returning.

I trust you all had a relaxing and rewarding summer. I am pleased to say my third summer in Bemidji was free of any tick born illnesses and broken bones.

One of my summer highlights was spending time with over two dozen BSU employees on the BEAVER FEVER team in the Lake Bemidji Dragon Boat Festival.

We challenged some of the event's fastest teams and ended up placing eighth overall out of 48 teams.

All 26 of us were also proud to represent Bemidji State – and the crowd clearly appreciated our participation. And of course – BUCKY was the hit of the parade!

For those who may have missed the event. It is quite the sight to see your university colleagues all wearing beaver tail headbands. One of our teammates cleverly gave his kids the opportunity to wear his headband.

There was a tremendous feeling of camaraderie on our team and throughout the entire event. Thanks to Erika Bailey-Johnson and Andy Hafs for leading the team as Captains.

As much as we cherish our summers, *especially* in northern Minnesota, It is especially energizing to hear from the buzz of conversation this morning that you are both excited and inspired to be back on campus.

Together, we stand at the threshold of another outstanding academic year at Bemidji State University – in what is our *Centennial* year! I believe there is no better time to be a part of this great institution. And, I believe we are in a very strong position as we complete our first century and prepare to begin our second.

As I reflect on what I learned as your President in my first two years, one thing stands out...I am continually impressed by the passion and dedication shown by members of our faculty and staff. Your commitment to the success of our students by providing high quality teaching and learning experiences, both within and outside of the classroom is what makes Bemidji State so very special.

I think you will agree with me...the campus buildings and facilities have never looked better. I spent a little time this summer in a few of our facilities where I had not previously been...getting to meet some of the staff whose work impacts each of us... every single day.

In July, Ricky Richter and Travis Barnes gave me a tour of our heating plan, where I also met members of the dedicated staff who work there. I was impressed with the small group of professionals who keep us cool in the summer and warm during the winters.

Their work has a profound impact on our student's success, as well as own work environment.

I want to remind you, that each one of you, in your daily work...makes an impact on the lives of students, by your interactions, and the way you connect with any student with whom you meet.

Your positive support for our students, affects whether or not they return for a **second semester, or second year**. I want to thank you for keeping that in mind each day.

This morning, we will share a number of topics with you:

What you'll hear today:

- I will first talk briefly about Who We Are: And to remind you of BSU's Vision & Mission.
- Next I will describe what we, as an institution, will focus on for the year.
- But, as you already know, it is not enough to hear about **WHAT** we will focus on. It is equally important to **Understand Why** we will focus on these things.

My comments will be followed by a budget and facilities update from VP Karen Snorek, and an enrollment update from Michelle Frenzel, our Executive Director for Enrollment Management.

I will then wrap up this morning's presentation with a focus on our Centennial year as we continue to set the Stage for Future Generations.

Who are we: Vision

Our vision states: We educate people to live inspired lives. It is quite clear and focused.

Who we are: Mission

I have taken the liberty to bold a few of the words within our Mission that hold particular meaning. Take a few moments to read our mission, and consider what we are doing to live up to who we say we are, and what we do.

*We create an **innovative, interdisciplinary** and highly **accessible learning environment** committed to **student success** and a **sustainable future** for our communities, state and planet. Through the **transformative power** of the liberal arts, **education** in the professions, and **robust engagement** of our students, we **instill** and promote **service** to others, **preservation** of the earth, and **respect and appreciation** for the diverse peoples of our region and world.*

As I meet with alumni of BSU, there is a recurring theme that I hear. It is the transformative nature of the educational experience here at BSU, and the impact it made on their lives.

The opportunities you provide to our students as they work closely with you... our faculty and our staff, is what they remember most fondly. Without a doubt, we change students' lives and unleash their remarkable potential to make a difference in the world.

When I think of my own educational journey, as the first in my family of seven children to get a degree, I recognize what a college education has done for me.

In May of 2017, I was honored to go back to my High School in Upper Michigan to give the graduation speech, and share my story with the 2017 class of Calumet High School. I grew up in a town of 300, and in 1981 graduated in a class of 147 students.

As an 18 year old, I never could have imagined what direction my life would take, or that I would have the honor to serve here as your University President.

As an undergraduate student, I attended a university much the same size as BSU. The support I received from faculty and staff who cared about my education was so very important to my ability to succeed.

That is why I am here at Bemidji State.

I am here because I know first hand...what a huge difference a college degree can make for each and every student...but especially for those, who like me...are the first in their family to attend college. I am here because I believe at Bemidji state, we inspire students, and transform their lives.

We positively impact generations of students, and their families. Through them we impact communities, and even the world.

I invite you to think about what you believe, and why you are here.

The complexity of your own story, like mine, was woven together, much like a traditional basket made of vines, birchbark, or grass. With each weave, the basket takes shape and becomes stronger, just as elements of our own stories shape us into the individuals we are today.

Together, we are shaping the baskets that make up our own students' lives. WE do this by showing them we care, and helping them to achieve their educational goals.

As we enter a new academic year...I want you to be aware of the direction we...together... will be taking Bemidji State University as we complete our first century.

BSU's Focus

To do this I will share our five areas of Focus for the year.

On your table there is a handout which includes these five areas. I have also included the Minnesota State System's three priorities and two key projects, as they will impact our work here.

Our First area of focus for 2019 is implementation of our Strategic Plan.

Second, but I would say, of very high importance is Investment in Our People.

Third is our Higher Learning Commission Accreditation with a visit scheduled for October 2019.

A fourth area of focus is our Hagg-Sauer Project which will involve the Demolition & Construction of that building with renovation in four other buildings across campus.

And our **5th area of focus** is on Emergency Preparedness.

You might ask? Does this mean these are the only 5 things we must pay attention to this year? The answer to that is no; however, they are five important priorities that will position us to better serve our students, and the region as we fulfill our mission and vision, and position BSU for the future.

Next...Let's take these five focus areas, and look into the "Why" behind each of them.

Understanding Why - Strategic Plan implementation

- Embrace diversity of students and employees
- Enrollment growth, recruitment & retention
- Financial Sustainability

Our strategic plan was developed with the goals of financial sustainability, and student success clearly in mind. We emphasize retention and enrollment growth, and expansion of diversity.

Our plans calls for us to better reflect the global society that our students will live in, by attracting and graduating many more American Indian students, other students of color, and international students.

In order to do this, we must become more diverse – in both our student body and our faculty and staff.

At BSU we must create opportunities for all of our students to experience, interact with, and appreciate diversity.

This will better prepare them to go out into a state, nation, and world that is more diverse than ever, and to find success and contribute for the good of all.

To do this we must continue to create a campus culture in which diversity is embraced and all members are safe, welcome and valued.

This relates to our next area of focus: Investing in our people.

Understanding Why - Investing in our people:

The most important and most valuable asset here at BSU is sitting right here in this room. You...our faculty and staff are to be treasured, supported and provided with opportunities for professional growth, and recognition. Over the past two years, we have developed some programs to help build community and demonstrate the value of our employees.

Examples include: The holiday cookies and coffee, an annual performance award ceremony held each April, training for our supervisors, and the expectation that all employees receive clear and frequent performance feedback.

We realize there is more work to do in this area, and we will continue with professional development this year for our supervisors to help them be more effective in their roles.

The Provost and Academic Deans will provide guidelines for those going through promotion and tenure to help ensure all faculty know what is expected in developing their portfolios.

Your table handout provides an overview of some changes we have implemented to aid in improving transparency in our communications. Communication is most effective when it is two way, rather than just one. We are providing opportunities for two-way communication.

In addition to my monthly open office hours, we have revised the format for input on key topics by creating the President's Leadership Council to replace what was formerly called Cabinet.

The BSU Insider will be used to communicate progress and seek input on the five areas of focus. It will be important for you to take a few minutes each month to read the material to stay informed on all of these topics, and to provide input.

Understanding Why - Higher Learning Commission Accreditation

In October of 2019, BSU will host our Higher Learning Commission peer review visit for accreditation. You might wonder why accreditation is important:

Accreditation is critical for our continued operation. It gives us the chance to prove to our students and the public that we have quality programs and the means by which to support them.

We see accreditation as our opportunity to examine what we do, and seek continuous improvement by making changes where needed to ensure we are living out our mission.

- Demonstrates how we educate people to lead inspired lives
- Allows BSU to participate in federal financial aid programs

Thanks to our Co-Directors for accreditation. Dr. Marty J. Wolf, and Dr. Randy Westhoff. And to all members of the criterion teams who are engaged in this very important work.

The process for reaccreditation takes two years of work by the campus community. You can learn more about the work of our criterion teams on our accreditation website: <https://www.bemidjistate.edu/hlc2020/>

The expectation is for EVERYONE of us to participate in and be informed of our progress toward gaining reaffirmation of accreditation for another 10 years.

Understanding Why - Hagg-Sauer Project

At the end of the 2018 Legislative session BSU received \$22.5M to demolish and replace Hagg-Sauer Hall and renovate relocated faculty offices.

I recognize that much of the planning for Hagg Sauer took place 4 or more years ago, before many of us arrived here at BSU. I also recognize that some of our faculty and staff may not have felt heard in the planning process that took place earlier. To simply recognize that is likely not enough.

We know there are many questions and concerns as we move forward, and you may have mixed feelings for this new design. The fact is, the current facility is simply not up to the standards related to accessibility, technology and flexible teaching spaces. We are quite confident we will create a highly positive learning environment with a state-of-the-art facility our students, and faculty deserve.

I encourage you to stay engaged as we move forward with this project. There will be several ways for you to be informed. We will do our best to support those who are affected, and minimize disruptions as renovations are planned during the school year in Sattgast, Bensen, Bangsberg and The AC Clark Library.

Vice President Karen Snorek will share some additional information on this, and she is hosting a session on Thursday of this week. Completion is expected in Fall 2020.

Understanding Why – Emergency Preparedness

Our **fifth focus area** for this year is on emergency preparedness.

Why should we focus on emergency preparedness? You might question what is the likelihood of a campus building being damaged by a fire or a tornado here in Bemidji.

You likely heard that Bemidji had a small tornado this summer. Fortunately, the damage in the city was minor with no injuries, and the campus impact was minimal.

Would we be prepared for continuing our operations if that Tornado had destroyed one or more of our buildings?

Let me set the scene for you. The date was June 19- and 20th, 2012. Summer classes were in session, The Campus was located in Superior, Wisconsin, a full 2 miles from any significant body of water. The closest flowing water was from a very small creek, located far below the first floor of the campus heating plant. All buildings are connected from the heating plant by underground tunnels that carry the steam lines.

After several days of 2 or more inches of rain, The Forecast was for significant rain, but what no one expected was 8 inches in 24 hours.

The impact to the campus – 15 of 16 campus buildings were flooded. Anywhere from 2 inches of water to 8 feet in the library basement. This basement housed the entire General Collection, Government documents and all periodicals.

The Heating plant flooded on all 3 levels, with one foot of water on the first floor, and the basement and sub-basement were fully submerged.

Damage to the campus infrastructure was nearly \$25 million, and there were many challenges. There were air quality concerns in every building, as air handlers shut down, internet was out for 2 days, and the phone switches were underwater.

We needed to move faculty and staff offices from across the campus into one central building. A few other challenges included: Asbestos abatement, document recovery from the records office, mold, water removal, air conditioning restoration, and generator repair, elevator repair, and Preservation of faculty research experiments in the science labs.

Through all of this...only one class day was missed. But it took three weeks to recover. And two years to dig up and replace all steam lines.

Could something like this happen here at BSU? Are we prepared for a flood, Fire, tornado, or violence within our institution?

It is important for our leadership team, as well as all members of the BSU community to know what to do in any given emergency.

Over the past two years, we have tested our emergency alert system, engaged the campus community in fire and tornado drills, and completed a table-top exercise with our leadership team to work on preparedness. We will ramp up our efforts this year and will engage you as well.

I strongly encourage you to attend the session this Thursday with Erin Moral, our Security Coordinator to learn more about Emergency Preparedness. Also, review our BSU Emergency Procedures Guide, so you know what to do in an emergency, and so you can also help any students or guests who are on campus.

As I wrap up this section of the presentation, It is my hope and expectation that you now have a better understanding of our Vision and Mission, as well **what** is our focus this year, and **why** we are focused on our top five priorities.

I will say this once again...the work of higher education is both absolutely essential and profoundly inspiring, *especially* as we practice it here at BSU.

Without a doubt, we change students' lives and unleash their remarkable potential to make a difference in the world.

I feel grateful to work in partnership with bright and dedicated individuals like you, who do your *utmost* to provide the highest quality educational experience for our students.

And as we do this work, we also have the privilege of celebrating Bemidji State University's Centennial.

Within our centennial year we will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Womens athletics at BSU, the 50th Birthday of Hobson's Union, and our 50th Annual Madrigal Dinners. Much to celebrate!

I believe, with the spirit of inspiration from the past and innovation for the future, BSU will be better than ever.

And as we position BSU for the next century, I invite you to consider what we can achieve by working together. As we learned when paddling a dragonboat.... The team that comes out in front is the one that has all of its members, paddling in unison, and focusing on the end goal.

Working together, we will stay focused on our goal, of educating the future generations of leaders for our state, country and the world.

Upcoming Events

Before you move to your next activity, I want to remind you of some additional events this week.

- BSU today! Mini-conference on August 22nd
- New student move-in day and convocation on Aug 24h
- And Community appreciation Day on August 30th.

Thank You

Thanks to all who assisted with this morning's event. We appreciate all of the effort that goes into making something like this happen.

Thank you so much for being here this morning and for being here for our students during the years ahead.

I wish you all a great semester and a wonderful year!

Go Beavers!