Remarks as prepared for delivery by Interim President Benjamin J. Allen

2017 Fall Address
September 14, 2017 | 6:30 p.m.
Great Hall | Memorial Union

Introduction by Cody West, Student Government President

Thank you, Cody, for that nice introduction!

- And thank you for your very effective leadership of Student Government.
- I also want to thank Reiman Gardens for providing flowers for tonight’s event.

Good evening and welcome to the beginning of an exciting new academic year at Iowa State University!

This year marks a time of transition for the Iowa State Community.

- Right now we’re in the prelude to a historic new era!
- In less than six weeks, the Board of Regents is expected to select a new president to lead this great university!

It’s also exciting simply because of the rarity with which it happens.

- This will be only the sixteenth time in Iowa State’s 159-year history that a new president will be named.

The presidential selection committee just met Tuesday to determine the list of semifinalists…

- We appreciate their efforts. They have an incredibly important job in helping to determine the future leader of this university.

I’m honored and proud to serve Iowa State during this transition.

- I have deep respect for and confidence in this university and in all of you who contribute to the greatness of Iowa State.

I’ve served in interim roles before.

- In fact, I think I’ve been in nearly every interim role here at Iowa State – I was interim dean, interim vice president, and now interim president.
- The interim role requires you to strike a careful balance – you must be thoughtful in determining what decisions you make now to keep the university moving forward, and what decisions you should pass on to the next president to empower them to shape their own agenda.
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But I do know this – we cannot have a passive interim president.

- While I am not going to lay out a detailed, comprehensive plan for the next year – that wouldn’t be fair to the next president…

- I am here to ensure we don’t lose any momentum.

- I also hope to offer some stability.
  - I know times of change naturally elicit some angst and uncertainty, and I hope to ease some of that.

This is a particularly interesting time – not only here at Iowa State, but in Iowa and across the country.

- We’re not only wondering who the next university president will be and what their priorities will entail…

- We also have a new Board of Regents president and soon a new executive director.

- We have a new Governor.

- And a relatively new President.

- Plus, we have some significant internal changes taking place – which I’ll talk more about in a few minutes.

But among all of this change… one thing is very clear: Iowa State is moving in a positive direction.…

- Our upward trajectory is fueled by unprecedented student, faculty, and staff success; enthusiastic engagement from our alumni and friends; and a robust, ambitious strategic plan.

- We cannot let up now!

Over the past decade, Iowa State has established itself as the school of choice in Iowa.

This fall, we welcomed 36,321 students – our second-largest enrollment ever and our most diverse student body ever!

- While this is still a substantial number of students, it’s also a more manageable number…
  - Now that our rapid growth has started to level off, we can make more substantive progress in catching up with eight prior years of record enrollment.
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- What I mean by that is: provided we can secure the necessary resources, we can make targeted investments in expanding campus capacity and protecting our quality.

What’s truly amazing is that you might think this rapid growth would cause our student success metrics to slip.

- In fact, it’s been just the opposite…
  - Our retention, graduation, and placement rates remain strong!

Another key measure of productivity is our external funding.

- We broke the half billion dollar mark last year for the first time ever!
- Of that amount, our faculty secured $243.7 million in research funding.
- Our faculty’s ability to attract competitive funding is indicative of their notable expertise in research and scholarship and the promise of our young faculty as emerging research leaders.
- It’s our faculty and staff who truly determine the level of excellence at this university and we thank them for their dedicated efforts.

External funding also includes private support – and Iowa State donors are stepping up like never before!

- To date, the Forever True, For Iowa State campaign has raised $837 million.
  - This puts us 76% of the way to our goal of $1.1 billion.
- It’s been an exciting three weeks – we’ve announced several historic gifts as part of this campaign.
  - On Monday, we announced a landmark $50 million commitment from the Ivy family, which will name the Debbie and Jerry Ivy College of Business.
    - This will be the first named college at Iowa State.
    - The gift will go into a permanent endowed fund, which will generate approximately $2 million annually to support key priorities of the college, including student scholarships and support.
  - The College of Business also received a $7 million lead gift from the Gerdin Family to expand the Gerdin building.
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- This will help accommodate the college’s 40% enrollment growth in just the past five years.

- It will help ensure that we have the necessary space to provide students a world-class education for years to come.

- The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences is also enjoying exciting news with last week’s announcement of…
  - an $8 million commitment from Kent Corporation,
  - a $4 million commitment from the Iowa Corn Promotion Board, and
  - a $2 million commitment from Sukup Manufacturing.

  These gifts will launch development of the university’s new Feed Mill and Grain Science Complex.

  This project will support a growing need for highly-skilled professionals in the feed and grain industries, which directly benefits Iowa’s ag economy!

- Now tonight, I’m thrilled to announce another milestone moment in our historic campaign.
  - You’ll recall in January, we shared that Iowa State was gifted an equity stake representing majority ownership of a Massachusetts-based education company.

  Well tonight, I’m pleased to announce the proceeds from this generous donation will generate an endowment valued at approximately $145 million!

  At the request of the donors, this gift will be placed into a permanent, endowed fund to benefit the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

  The fund will generate about $5-6 million each year to support things such as student scholarships, new programs, faculty positions, and facilities.

  - In fact, the new endowment will more than triple the amount of scholarship dollars awarded by the college.

  But the impact of this gift will go well beyond the college.

  LAS offers core courses for students in every major, meaning this gift will benefit virtually every student that passes through Iowa State!

  This is truly a game-changing, monumental gift for this university!
• It’s important to understand that while this campaign is bringing a significant amount of money to the university, every dollar is directed for a purpose determined by the donor.

  o We take very seriously our responsibility to fulfill our donors’ wishes –
    ▪ whether they want their donation to support scholarships, faculty positions, facility improvements, or athletics –
    ▪ we are committed to ensuring those funds are used for their specified purpose.

• Students, however, are reaping some of the biggest benefits of our donors’ generosity.

  o Last year alone, more than $16.5 million from donor support was awarded in scholarships.
    ▪ This is an updated figure from what I announced in my campus message the first day of class.
    ▪ The Forever True campaign has made student support a top priority.
      • Our goal is for at least half of all the money raised during this historic campaign to go directly to student support.

• Private gifts have also made it possible for us to expand and improve our campus infrastructure.

  o The newly opened Bessey Hall addition…
  
  o The Advanced Teaching and Research Facility – which will open in early 2018… and
  
  o The Student Innovation Center – which is slated for completion in 2020…
    ▪ All of these facilities are made possible by a combination of private support and state funding.

• Another new facility now open and serving students is the Friley Windows Dining Center.
And it’s not just central campus that is undergoing big changes.

• We’re also seeing a lot of new development at the Research Park.

  o The new Provisions restaurant is now open.
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- Ames Racquet and Fitness Club is also open – located behind ISU’s Economic Development Core Facility.

- Adjacent to that – construction is underway on the new McFarland Clinic and Lily Pad Learning Center – which are expected to open late spring or early next summer.

- And just a few weeks ago, Sukup Manufacturing announced plans to open an office at the Research Park – specifically to capitalize on the engineering and technical expertise of our students, faculty, and park professionals.

  - This is a great example of the strong partnership model that makes the park an attractive place for companies to locate.

- Speaking of attractive – we’re also seeing some beautiful improvements in and around Jack Trice Stadium and Reiman Gardens!

It’s exciting to see the progress!

- There’s a lot of energy and enthusiasm.

- We are certainly moving in the right direction…

But it’s also important to acknowledge the challenges our campus and country are facing.

Those impacted by Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma have been on my mind.

- Here at Iowa State, we have been reaching out to members of our campus community who are from Texas, Florida, and other areas affected by the devastating storms as well as alumni who live in the affected areas.

- I know there are many Iowans who have headed south to help with hurricane relief – and we thank them for their efforts.

We’re also reaching out to members of the Iowa State community impacted by the recent federal decision to end the DACA immigration program.

- A public forum, the second of a series, was held last week to bring immigration experts and campus resource specialists together to share information and answer questions.

- As is true for this issue as well as any other issue or challenge impacting our campus… we will continue to provide resources, guidance, and support for any member of our community who needs it.

There’s no doubt political and social tensions are reverberating across our country and campus.
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- We’re still reeling from the disturbing events last month at the University of Virginia involving white supremacists.

- Then just a few days later, we had an incident on our own campus of a racist social media post.

- And last week racist stickers were found on campus and in the Ames community.

These events underscore the reality that we still have a lot of work to do to eliminate racism, bigotry, and discrimination.

- One of the most important areas of focus for us at Iowa State is that of creating a safe, welcoming, inclusive, and equitable environment for everyone.

- We can have the best academic programs, new state-of-the-art facilities, and the most beautiful campus – but if people don’t feel comfortable and valued – they won’t want to come here.

This has been at the forefront for me since day one.

- Campus leadership has been deeply involved over the summer in assessing our approach to campus climate to ensure we’re being more thoughtful and proactive.
  
  - We’ve been working on training, leadership development, communication, and campus security enhancements.
  
  - We recognize we have a large number of programs and initiatives dedicated to diversity – but volume isn’t necessarily a measure of effectiveness.

That is why, next month we’ll be launching a comprehensive campus climate survey to assess our policies and programs.

- Everyone – all students, faculty, and staff – will be asked to take part.

- Your participation is essential for us to get an honest, complete assessment that can lead to effective, sustainable change.

- I want to thank all of you who have been involved in the development of this survey.
  
  - It’s an important effort, and I appreciate your time and dedication.

- The survey is scheduled to launch October 3.

Also launching this fall is the Green Dot program.
• This is a sexual misconduct and personal violence prevention program that emphasizes bystander intervention.

• Dozens of faculty, staff, and students already completed training over the summer.
  o The crux of this program is that it is imperative that all of us take responsibility to prevent violence on our campus.

• You’ll be hearing more about this campus safety and prevention initiative later this month.
  o The official launch date is September 27.

Both the climate survey and the Green Dot program as well other campus initiatives are important tools in our effort to improve campus climate.

• That being said, safety and inclusion are not simply programmatic or operational issues.

Training and education are important – but at the core of creating a truly inclusive community is our ability to connect with each other as people.

• Too often we’re walking around campus with our earbuds in and our heads buried in our smart phones.
  o It’s not just students – this is true of faculty, staff, and administrators.

• This year, I challenge you to work each day to live out the Principles of the Iowa State Community.
  o Consider how you can demonstrate respect, purpose, and cooperation.
  o What can you do to reject discrimination, value diversity, and engage in honest and respectful expression?

• It can be as simple as – saying hello to someone you don’t know, making eye-contact, shaking hands, sharing a smile, and having a conversation.

• If we truly want to break the barriers of social and political tension, we need to build up and invest in personal relationships.
  o You don’t have to agree with every person, idea or belief you encounter… in fact, you shouldn’t.
  o And if you hear something that you disagree with or you know not to be true – speak up.
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- Freedom of expression is a foundational principle of higher education.
- It’s this respectful exchange of give and take… making an effort to understand diverse perspectives… and treating others with respect and empathy that allows us to grow.

- It is the responsibility of everyone at Iowa State to work toward a safe, inclusive community.
  - I urge all of us to make continuous, intentional efforts to enhance our campus climate.

Another key challenge we are facing is that of the budget.

Maintaining quality while meeting the requirements of being a land-grant university, a member of the AAU, and being committed to being a student-centric university requires substantial resources.

- As most of you know, we are contending with major cuts in state funding totaling $11.5 million over the past year.
- And despite a passionate, grassroots effort, state funding for the Leopold Center was eliminated, and funding cuts were made to the Nutrient Research Center and Small Business Development Center.

Over the past eight years, we have seen our state appropriation drop by more than $56 million.

- In each of the last two years, the universities proposed and the Board of Regents approved last-minute tuition hikes to offset inadequate state funding due to late legislative cuts to our state appropriations.
- This is not a practice we want to continue.
- It’s not fair to our students and their parents who have little time to prepare—they need more predictable tuition rates for budgeting.
- And it is not the way to finance a portion of the university—that is, with last minute, uncertain tuition dollars.

It’s also not fair to our faculty and staff.

- As a result of state funding cuts, I made a very difficult decision this summer to not mandate raises this year.
- This was an incredibly hard decision…
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- I see how dedicated our faculty and staff are, and...
- I know that over the past decade, more and more has been asked of you – particularly the extra work involved in accommodating our growth.
- It’s important that you know how much I appreciate what each and every one of you is doing to make Iowa State an exceptional institution.
- I also want you to know that I understand words only go so far.
  - You must be fairly and competitively compensated for your efforts or you will look for other opportunities.

Moving forward, we hope to achieve some financial stability through our 5-year tuition plan.

- As you know, the university presidents were requested to present a five-year tuition plan to improve the transparency, predictability, and, stability surrounding the tuition issue.
- We presented and submitted our plan to the Tuition Task Force on August 9th.

Last week, the Board of Regents Tuition Task Force presented a summary of our plan – as well as Iowa’s and UNI’s – to the full board.

- The next step is for us to present a formal request in October for tuition rates for next academic year.
- It’s important to know that Iowa State’s 5-year tuition plan is not based on how we compare to our peer institutions.
- Instead, we looked at who we are and where we need to be to maintain our exceptional quality as well as...
  - protect the unique Iowa State brand and value that is so meaningful to the state, our students, employees, and supporters.
- We also had to make some assumptions – we’re assuming that for the next five years our general operating state appropriation will be flat at its current level of about $172 million.
  - This could be an ambitious assumption.
    - We believe the state will continue to face major economic challenges this year.

This is not to say that we will no longer push the state to make higher education a priority.

- We will continue to advocate strongly for increased funding from the state.
• The reduction in state appropriations was the result of economic challenges… but also of the priority of the politicians.
  o We are a public institution and state support is vital.

• We’re also assuming we won’t see major swings in enrollment.
  o We expect to see more moderate enrollment changes – like this fall.

• We then calculated the cost of achieving four key priorities to maintain quality:
  1. Retaining top faculty and staff with competitive salaries and pay increases.
     • This will ensure students are learning from and supported by the best.
  2. Recruiting enough top faculty to achieve a net increase of 330 faculty.
     • This will lower the student-to-faculty ratio to 16:1, which is a key indicator our students use to determine quality.
     • We also need a sufficient number of new staff to support university operations.
  3. Investing in new building capacity and maintenance to accommodate our students, faculty, and staff.
  4. And making new investments in need-based financial aid to ensure Iowa State remains accessible to all students.

Based on our priorities and assumptions, we determined we would need to raise tuition 7% annually for resident undergraduates and 4% annually for nonresident undergraduates to acquire the necessary resources.

• We also proposed several changes to our differential tuition model.

Though a significant tuition increase is necessary to maintain quality, we are committed to doing everything we can to minimize the impact on our students and their families.

• As I mentioned earlier, we have placed a major emphasis on private support for scholarships.
  o We’ve also invested another $6.8 million in student financial aid this year – which was nearly half our new revenue for FY18.
• We are deepening cooperative agreements with community colleges to ensure students have more affordable options and paths to a 4-year degree.

• We’ll also continue to focus on enhancing students’ financial literacy to help them make informed financial decisions.
  
  o This is the mission of our Student Loan Education Office.
  
  o It’s also the goal of the new Cyclone Cash Course financial literacy program that all first-year students must take beginning in the spring.

• And we’ll continue to advocate strongly for state support.
  
  o We expect the Board of Regents to call a special meeting this month to discuss our FY19 state appropriation request.

• If we do see significant changes in state support or significant changes to any of our budget assumptions – we will reevaluate our tuition proposal in a way that gives students and families plenty of time to plan accordingly.

• I do want to thank members of our shared governance groups –
  
  o P&S Council led by Jessica Bell
  
  o Faculty Senate led by Tim Day
  
  o Graduate and Professional Student Senate led by Vivek Lawana
  
  o And Student Government led by Cody West

• Your leadership, perspective, and the input you brought to the table from your constituents were invaluable as we worked through the development of our 5-year tuition proposal.

The third basic source for funding is cost savings, which we have worked hard to achieve.

• This has been a long-standing commitment at this university and it is an expectation from the Board of Regents.
  
  o We have been and will continue to focus on operating as efficiently as possible.

• I want to thank all of you who have been involved in identifying cost-savings and efficiency measures.

• Although we will continue to work hard to generate efficiencies in the sense of doing the things we do more cost effectively, I do not believe these savings will be robust enough
to make our financial model – *(proposed tuition with assumed no increases in state appropriations)* – work.

- That means we will need to make some tough decisions on what we should be doing—as well as even tougher decisions on what we should stop doing.
  - In short, our financial model requires meaningful reallocation.

- Over the next several weeks, I will be developing a plan to engage deeply with our shared governance groups to begin discussions about possible reallocation efforts.

In addition to the budget, there are several initiatives that have or will produce very substantial changes affecting almost everyone at the university.

By now you’ve heard that Workday is a new enterprise software system that will replace our old legacy computer systems.

- It’s a complex, multi-year project that aims to fundamentally improve our human resources, finance, and student business processes and services.

- I know many people have been deeply involved in this project – whether through development, process mapping, design, testing, or training.

- I can’t overstate the magnitude of this project – both the work it takes to bring all components online and make them fully operational as well as the positive outcomes we hope to achieve.

- I appreciate everyone’s involvement, participation, and patience as we move this project forward!

Our Professional and Scientific Staff are also involved in a major initiative to review and revamp the way they are classified and compensated.

- I certainly agree that a modern, equitable, and nimble classification and compensation structure is essential to ensure we are able to attract and retain P&S staff.

- P&S employees play a vital role in fulfilling our mission – and I want you to know how much your contributions are appreciated.

- Like Workday, this review is an ongoing project.

- It won’t be completed until next summer.

- But I want to make sure we’re making appropriate progress during my time here.
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- This project will impact all 3,000 P&S employees – I encourage you to stay informed through the class and comp review web page.

Our merit employees have also endured challenges following the legislative changes to the state’s collective bargaining laws.

- I appreciate the patience, flexibility, and understanding of our merit staff as we’ve worked through these changes.

- I also appreciate the dedicated efforts of University Human Resources.
  - They have taken great care to communicate, train, and provide support and resources as these changes took effect.

- We value our merit employees and we want to ensure you are taken care of.

I know this has been a challenging time for many, but I want you to know that your well-being is our highest priority.

- To that end, we recognize the importance of equipping you with tools and resources to support your own well-being – whether that’s mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, or financial.

- As part of this commitment to you, we have officially launched Iowa State’s new holistic employee well-being program.

- Adventure 2 is a program coordinated by ISU WellBeing to support your personal health and well-being, connect you with colleagues, and contribute to a thriving culture of well-being here at Iowa State.

Earlier I mentioned that as interim, there are some decisions that I should pass on to the next president.

- I decided it would be in the university’s best interest to let the next president be involved in filling three key leadership positions:
  - The search for Vice President for Human Resources was in progress when I came on board.
    - Although the search committee was thoughtful and diligent in their work, unfortunately, we were unable to find a suitable person to fill that role.
    - As a result, I decided a new search should convene after the new president has assumed his or her role.
We’re also waiting to launch searches for the Vice President for Extension and Outreach, and the Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine.

We are very fortunate to have three exceptional leaders who have stepped up to serve in these roles in an interim capacity.

I’d like to acknowledge and thank:

- Kristi Darr, Interim Vice President for Human Resources,
- John Lawrence, Interim Vice President for Extension and Outreach, and
- Pat Halbur, Interim Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine.

From one interim to another – I greatly appreciate your willingness to serve!

I also want to recognize several new members of the university leadership team:

- Vernon Hurte joins us as Associate Vice President and Dean of Students.
- Paul Fuligni is the new Associate Vice President for Facilities Planning and Management.
- Deanna Clingan-Fischer is the new University Ombuds Officer.
- Michael Newton is the new Assistant Vice President and Chief of Police for ISU PD.
- And Kristin Failor is our new State Relations Officer.

We’ve also had a few internal leadership moves:

- In Student Affairs: Laura Doering was appointed Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Success.
- And Pete Englin was appointed Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and retains his role as Director of Residence.
- In the Provost’s Office: Bill Graves was appointed Dean of the Graduate College.
- And Ann Marie VanDerZanden has been appointed Associate Provost for Academic Programs.

And in athletics:

- We have a new head wrestling coach, Kevin Dresser.
• And Jamie Pinkerton returns to Iowa State as head softball coach.

I also want to welcome the 80 new faculty, the numerous new staff members, and all of the new students who are joining Iowa State this year.

• Please join me in congratulating and welcoming all new members of the Iowa State community.

• As I conclude tonight, I want to say how wonderful it has been to return to Iowa State after more than a decade away and see the tremendous growth, progress, excitement, and energy throughout the university.

• Pat and I are especially energized by being around ISU students again.
  o These students will make a difference in the world.
  o And the faculty and staff are preparing them to make that difference.

• Every one of you – students, faculty, and staff – have much to be proud of!
  o This truly is an exceptional institution with so much to offer.

• I am confident the search committee and the Board of Regents will be able to find an outstanding new president, and we will facilitate a smooth transition of leadership.

• I know times of change can be disconcerting.
  o But I also hope you can take some time to enjoy the excitement of starting a new era at Iowa State!

• I want to thank all of you – students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends – for your extra effort during this time of transition.

• Thank you for your leadership, insight, advice, and most of all - patience!

• Have a great year and Go Cyclones!

With our time remaining, I’d like to open up the floor to your questions.