

New UI president to focus on boosting enrollment

Staben plans major recruitment effort for this fall

Elizabeth Rudd/Lewiston Tribune

MOSCOW - University of Idaho President Chuck Staben has been officially on the job for four days, but he's already planning to focus on boosting this fall's enrollment.

Staben told UI faculty, staff and some students during his first university address as president that they could expect to see strong efforts put toward recruitment for the Moscow campus, particularly of Idaho students.

"I invite your ideas on how we can do this even more effectively," Staben said Monday afternoon in the Administration Building auditorium.

The State Board of Education selected Staben as UI's 18th president in November to replace former UI President Duane Nellis, who left campus last year to lead Texas Tech University. Staben, 55, is the former provost and vice president for academic affairs at the University of South Dakota and officially took the reins at UI on Saturday.

In a more long-term sense, Staben said he plans to look at UI's research and opportunities the institution has to participate in high-end research as a public, land-grant university.

While Staben said Monday he planned to begin his tenure actively, he noted he would also be in a learning phase for his first few months on campus.

"I want your input on the direction we should go to improve," he told the crowd.

That isn't limited to the academic side of the university.

Unlike former interim President Don Burnett, Staben said he does not have deeply rooted stories that tie him to Idaho and UI - but that he wants to hear them. Burnett has often spoken of how his parents attended UI and how they used to sing him the Vandal fight song when he was younger.

The new president also said it was evident to him that Burnett has a deep love and dedication to UI, and Staben will work with the former College of Law dean as he transitions into his new role.

"The first thing we all should do is thank Don Burnett for his service and leadership," Staben said.

Staben spent last week accompanying Burnett to the Idaho State Board of Education meeting in Boise.

When asked about current proposed legislation at the Statehouse relating to guns on campus, Staben said he thought it was important to reassure students that all of Idaho's universities are safe.

"Guns on campus is a challenging issue for all the universities," he said.

Staben said he and his wife, Mary Beth, think Moscow will be a good place to set down roots and he has already attended UI basketball games and the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival. The couple has two sons and one daughter, who are all in college.

"I'm deeply honored to be here and I'm deeply committed to being here," Staben said.

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