

# Staben says enrollment boost will take time

*UI's new president pays visit to Lewiston*

**Elizabeth Rudd/Lewiston Tribune**

University of Idaho President Chuck Staben has already begun taking steps toward boosting enrollment, but by how much is still undefined.

"It will take a number of years for the university to significantly boost enrollment," Staben said during a reception Wednesday night at the Red Lion

Hotel in Lewiston.

Staben told the crowd of about 50 people that an enrollment management consultant visited UI's Moscow campus Wednesday to discuss what the university could do to increase its numbers. He said that person is someone UI will continue to work with and that he thinks it will take about a year to develop a clear plan.

Staben began his role as president March 1 after being selected by the Idaho State Board of Education to replace former UI President Duane Nellis, who took the helm of Texas Tech University last year. Staben, who was accompanied by his wife Mary Beth, mingled with several Lewiston dignitaries Wednesday night, including Mayor Jim Kleeburg, 2nd District Judge Jeff M. Brudie and Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee Chairman Silas Whitman. Also in attendance were Idaho state Reps. Shirley Ringo, Thyra Stevenson and John Rusche, and Idaho state Sen. Dan Johnson.

Increasing enrollment was just one of several questions Staben was asked by various crowd members during his visit. Others inquired about his relationships with the presidents of Idaho's other colleges and universities, what is happening with a possible activity center next to the Kibbie Dome, and when construction would begin on the Integrated Research and Innovation Center.

"It's a pretty positive experience to meet people who care so deeply about the university," Staben said after taking questions.

UI has a great value, Staben said, and he's confident that UI can significantly increase its enrollment in the coming years if parents and students know that.

Another change Staben has already implemented that he thinks will help with enrollment is deferring the application fee for students who have otherwise completed the application and would be accepted into UI. Staben said UI discovered about 800 potential students did not include the application fee, which he said is a sign the student comes from a low-income family.

What UI has opted to do, he said, is defer the fee, accept the students and then have the students pay the fee with financial aid if they enroll at UI.

Staben said that is a simple, straightforward way to show those students that the university wants them to come to school and is willing to help make it happen.

"We don't even lose a dollar (by doing that)," he said.

Staben said he doesn't anticipate getting a majority of those students because the timing came a little late for the next academic year, but it's a start.

"If we get 10 percent, if we get 80 of those students to come to the university, I think that's a triumph," he said.

As far as how much the university will grow, Staben said that's something he thinks requires a campus dialogue to determine what UI can sustain. But Staben said UI could see a significant increase even if it were to only grow its portion of the Idaho State Board of Education's goal of having at least 60 percent of residents between 25 and 34 with a degree or certificate by 2020.

"We are a great university," Staben said. "We can be an even better university."

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