12. Changing the Core: Keiser Relieves Barnes

Educators across the land experienced four major intrusions on their campuses during the decade John Barnes presided at Boise, Ernest Hartung was president in Moscow, and William Davis headed Pocatello’s school. After several years of student demonstrations and violence (the first obtrusion) academic standards and programs were diluted. In the meantime faculty, insecure as tenure was tampered with and graduating doctorates flooded academia, experimented with unionization. The fourth intrusion, originating in Washington, D.C., was governmental interference by edict and statute. All four touched Boise State, but the demonstrations were nonviolent, while academic and vocational programs were ultimately strengthened rather than diluted. Faculty unionized, however, the indifferent majority cast their lot with the campus Senate and its several committees. As for Washington’s impositions, Boise State cooperated with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare while philosophically resisting the homogenization of higher education and urging the need for independence and diversity among Idaho’s three universities.

The attitude of student leaders regarding their president was similar to the mood of those who were elected to office in Reno. Rather than confront the administration as students had at Columbia in 1968, Harvard and Cornell the following year, and Kent and Jackson State in May, 1970, University of Nevada students poured out by the hundreds in October, 1969, to honor N. Ed Miller, president for about four years, declaring their appreciation for his facile leadership and sincere interest in their affairs. At Boise the spokesman for a partisan crowd of about four hundred attributed similar qualities to John Barnes, when students gathered outside his office in May, 1970. According to their Vice President, Leland Mercy, scholars considered the upgraded library and bolstered curriculum major accomplishments. There were, of course, young people in the crowd who were less solicitous, and dissenters were not outspoken.

That parallel incidents took place in Reno and Boise may have influenced Nevada’s search committee, when Miller resigned during the fall 1973 semester, accepting another university presidency. Invited to become an applicant for his position, Barnes declined because “exciting challenges” remained at Boise State, soon to be named a university. The goals and objectives officials had established demanded his concentrated attention, Barnes told Reno’s Don Driggs, and the changes made during the next three years were particularly significant.¹
ADMINISTRATIVE VEXATIONS

Concerned about student-faculty ratios, higher than at sister institutions, and state funding for campus structures, Student Body President Kit Christensen went to the top, airing his frustrations with Governor Cecil Andrus. Responding to Christensen's candid letter, Andrus explained that unfortunately the Legislature had cut recommended higher education appropriations by almost two million dollars, consequently the allotments for degree-granting colleges and universities were insufficient for ratio reductions. Addressing Christensen's contention that state money had not been appropriated for buildings, Andrus said he was misinformed. Two vocational structures had been partially funded, while the state provided over three million dollars for the dual Science-Education Building, a half-million for land acquisition, and $90,000 for heating plant expansion.

Agreeing with Andrus, the administration found reason to be optimistic during those months preceding the nation's bicentennial year. Meeting with the faculty in September, 1975, Barnes cited the state funding Andrus had outlined for Christensen, concluding that buildings sometimes speak louder than words. At the same time, Barnes accentuated recent curricular development such as the graduate degrees in Education and Business. Internships and work-study opportunities had been created which enabled the participants to earn while they learned. However, the liberal arts "tour" prescribed for them needed attention.

There would be further curricular refinements and course expansion when money was allotted for the employment of additional faculty. But, where were they to be housed? Sixty-seven professors were already occupying converted off-campus houses. Secretarial stations were scattered about in hallways, a temporary situation which the administration regretted. People crowded into unsatisfactory quarters were reminded that modern, adequate structures were on the horizon.

Writing for the monthly BSU Focus, first issued in the fall of 1975, Barnes sanguinely supposed the cardinal faculty characteristics, tolerance and liberality, were exhibited at Boise State as professors shared their talents with young men and women from all walks of life. Overseeing the university, where many scholars sustained themselves with part-time jobs, were the trustees, considered some of the best minds in the state. Independent thinkers seldom dissuaded once opinions were formed, they apparently enjoyed voluntary service since virtually all of them concluded their association with higher education reluctantly, it seemed to Barnes. The State Board, he went on to say, was not composed of political cronies seeking public exposure and power over people and issues. However, some of their decisions had frustrated his effort to alter the organization of the institution.

When Joseph Spulnik, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences prepared to retire in the spring of 1976, the Faculty Senate unanimously decided that BSU's largest school should be divided. Favoring this separation, Spulnik said that two schools rather than one should have been formed in 1969, when the college entered the state system. Now in harmony with this, Barnes presented the faculty resolution to the board, but the trustees abruptly rejected the plan for political and pecuniary reasons; with a smaller administrative structure, Boise was a lesser threat to Moscow, and dividing Arts and Sciences would require the employment of another dean. As matters turned out, the board later approved the appointment of Illinois educator William Keppler as Spulnik's successor, and Asa Rylie as Vice President for Financial Affairs following the untimely death of Roger Green, who at age thirty-six had distinguished himself in that position.
A financial vice president at Sangamon University in Lincoln’s Springfield, Illinois, where John Keiser presided before following him to Boise State, Asa Ruyle was one of about one hundred applicants wishing to succeed Green. When several members of the School of Business faculty applied, their dean, Charlie Lein, withdrew from the screening committee that eventually chose Ruyle. Bursar as well as one of three vice presidents, Ruyle supervised all of the institution’s financial units such as purchasing, auditing, the budget office and the controller. He was also responsible for the print shop, book store, data processing, personnel office, buildings and grounds.

While Keiser would be faced with football irregularities when he arrived in 1978, Ruyle’s immediate challenge was the internal refinement of the purchasing policies dictated by the state. Three deans had levied complaints because the campus buyers did not seem to be service oriented; the lag between requisitions, the issuing of purchase orders and delivery time was too long. When the buck stopped on Barnes’ desk, he responded with a characteristic homely, vernacular reproof. Addressing the director of auxiliary services, he wrote, “You guys seem so darned paper oriented that you think a policy manual or conference is a solution to everything.” A recent letter meant to be instructive was so full of jargon it had confused the recipients. Please remember, the buyers were told, the administration was simply interested in expeditious ordering or bidding. Efficiencies were soon achieved.

**C A M P U S C O U P S**

Focus editor Robert Hall, a BJC tennis ace in 1951, put a grin on his February, 1977, caricature of Barnes because the “Carter effect” was in fashion. Georgia’s Jimmy Carter was charmingly optimistic as he began his four White House years. Like Carter, Barnes found reason for buoyancy in his realm, where constant change and conflict had become characteristic. “We at Boise DO have a lot to smile about,” he said blissfully in his column. The science building would soon be occupied, and the attached seven-story home for Education was scheduled for construction as was the footbridge linking the campus with Julia Davis Park, so important to the Green Belt group which would be headed by history professor Warren Tozer. Channel Enterprises’ halfway house for people who had been incarcerated had been “midwifed,” while BSU Foundation, Inc. nursed its assets and enlarged its base. KBSU, the long awaited FM radio station had joined KAID television on the air, and Right to Read Centers for adult learners were functional in Caldwell, McCall and Twin Falls’ Magic Valley, the latter in cooperation with Idaho State University.

Not yet resolved was the proposed construction of a versatile structure large enough to accommodate athletics, and the thousands of people who would flock onto campus to hear the voices and rhythms of popular entertainers. In the meantime, the stadium (completed in two phases during the 1970s), one of the region’s admirable arenas for football and track, was occasionally used for other events. Trained in the outdated gymnasium, the basketball team led by Coach Doran Conner since 1973, won the Big Sky championship in Ogden, Utah, defeating Weber State in double overtime. Coach Michael Young’s wrestlers placed first for the fourth straight time in February, 1976, at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, and Edward Jacoby’s cross country runners won the Big Sky meet held there in May.

After the Broncos emerged Big Sky Champions in 1977, the press concluded that football excellence, a tradition at Boise State, was at the very heart of the
institution's rise from a junior college into a growing university. The athletic program in general, not just football and basketball, but wrestling, track, baseball, tennis and golf records were respectable, while women's intercollegiate sports, particularly basketball, field hockey and gymnastics also publicized Boise State. Of greater consequence, academicians believed, was the National Endowment for the Humanities' $350,000 grant for the development of team-taught studies. With English, History, Political Science and Philosophy participating, the program was launched with the core course, "Humanities: A View of the Nature of Man." Interdisciplinary Studies, eventually directed by William Skillern, strengthened the curriculum as the student body grew, making Boise State measured by "headcount" Idaho's largest institution of higher learning. 3

In his September, 1976, article, "The Class of 1980," Bullington called for perennial curricula assessment and an analysis of the educational experience at Boise State, a continuing quest he emphasized during his interim presidency. Foundational was the endorsement by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) of Gerald Wallace's School of Education. Also accredited were the dental assistant program in Don Miller's Area Vocational Technical School, and other health science courses, while the School of Business achieved candidacy. Scheduled to begin the next fall semester along with Army ROTC was a baccalaureate degree in construction management, similar to the engineering, business and mathematics majors at Oklahoma State University, and Arizona's universities in Tempe and Tucson.
In a twenty-one page document distributed in March, 1977, the authors presumed the participating faculty had expended energy and consumed intellectual fuel, while developing and expanding programs the previous eight years, at a rate burned by aircraft flying at full throttle. Now, they should pull back and systematically examine curricula, the periodic self-study exercise necessary for continual accreditation. Such internal matters, so essential to the campus community, understandably were seldom examined by the reporters who kept the public informed.

Athletic rather than academic prowess received greater media attention in Boise, Moscow and Pocatello, along with new construction of large dimension and extraordinary philanthropy. Considered particularly fortuitous for BSU was the deferred gift of an eighteen-room Warm Springs Avenue house designed by architect Kirtland Cutter of Spokane in 1928, for department store magnate C.C. Anderson, who had lived there until the 1950s. The donors, William and Gladys Langroise, who had previously made generous contributions to higher education, conveyed their property with the stipulation that it would become the home of the University's presidents after the demise of the benefactors.

The generous gift was appropriate, since the state furnished housing for the presidents at Lewiston, Moscow and Pocatello. However, the press criticized the contribution. "Langroise Home to Spoil Future BSU Presidents," the Statesman supposed in February, 1977, because the vine-covered, English mansion nominated for the National Register of Historic Places would allow BSU "royalty" a posh living style in a magnificent house superior to Idaho's gubernatorial quarters. The editorial aroused the ire of several influential people who scolded publisher Robert Miller, and the Statesman reacted objectively. Photographs of the spacious presidential homes in Moscow and Pocatello were published along with the residence for the presidents who would follow Barnes and Keiser. Viewed and described together, the Langroise house, conveniently located northeast of campus, did not appear to be extravagant.

The commodious dwelling was gratefully accepted by Board Chairman Edward Benoit, because Boise State was the only university requiring its president to purchase housing. Museum director Arthur Hart pointed out that he expected this key residence in a historic neighborhood to become eligible for federal assistance for exterior maintenance. Thus, the Langroise house would not burden taxpayers while the presidents, frequently obliged to entertain large groups in their not-so-private homes, would have hosting space in appropriate environs five minutes driving time from campus.
Was the acquisition of a presidential residence a personal coup? Yes, in the same sense that campus structural growth brought considerable satisfaction. Barnes would never occupy the Langroise house, and he expected to be serving higher education elsewhere when the Science-Education complex, a pavilion and a fine arts center were completed by his successor. Some administrators, he observed, became so concerned with facilities they suffered "presidential myopia," while neglecting other needs of the product of the university, the student consumer.

Having sustained injuries at age seventeen that impaired his sight and hearing, creating lingering although not debilitating visual and audio impediments, Barnes used the term myopia with some understanding. Wishing to assure the twelve thousand Focus recipients his administration was not nearsighted, he cited curricular growth and academic sophistication in his March, 1969, column; themes generally pursued rather than campus development. To illustrate scholarly excellence, Barnes mentioned theatre arts major Michael Hoffman of Payette, a four-point senator destined to lead the student body and become a Rhodes Scholar. Eric Bischoff from Blackfoot, and Meridian's Bruce Richardson had written an original musical. John Elliott of Twin Falls, a former Arbiter editor, had been named manager of the Special Events Center, and Jan Lythgoe of Boise was a member of the Student Union Board of Governors.

At a recent tournament attracting forty-seven teams to the University of Arizona in Tucson, Boise State's debaters placed third. Claudia Swanson, an elementary education honors student, had represented BSU at a convention in Arlington, Virginia. Julie Morris Jones, a Twin Falls National Merit Scholar in history, interned at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. as did Karen Ford, a Boisean, while Susan Rinard of Mountain Home, "Miss Boise State University" in 1976, assisted in Governor Andrus' office. The achievements of these students and other scholars demonstrated, officials believed, that Idaho's education dollars were wisely spent in Boise.

The Dean's List, spring semester, 1977, contained the names of over a thousand scholars, among them almost four hundred who had maintained four-point grades, the coveted "straight A" record. About three hundred on the academic honor role had achieved only slightly less, and nearly five hundred students completed the semester with a 3.5 average or better. Thereafter, some of these highly motivated learners continued their education at a graduate school, as Caroline Musgrave had done at Oregon State University, completing her doctorate at age twenty-four. Meanwhile, athletes Brent Mciver, Glenn Sparks and Kirk Strawser were named Academic All Americans, as was football's Sam Miller the following year.

Big Sky football champions the fall of 1977, the Broncos' success had rested on the "heroics" of Terry Hutt, Willie Beamon, Dee Picket, Hoskin Hogan, Chris Malmgreen, Terry Zahner and Cedric Minter, the press concluded. Coach Jim Criner, in charge since Tony Knap's departure for Nevada's university in Las Vegas, was criticized for unnecessarily running up the score moments before a victory over the Vandals in Moscow's Kibbie Dome. Nonetheless, the season had been a thrilling one for Boise fans, and the semester a challenging one for the interim administration after John Barnes left during the summer of 1977.

His resignation stunned BSU, Focus had assumed in May, not realizing that the decision to do so had been made some months earlier. However, Barnes' final semester ending his decade of energetic leadership, a scholastically satisfying one, was administratively less comfortable than it might have been had resignation procedures been smoothed out by the State Board. 5
B A R N E S  S T E P S  D O W N

All of the public senior institutions of higher learning received ingressive leadership about the same time; Lee Vickers replaced Jerold Dugger at Lewiston; Ernest Hartung’s successor at Moscow was Richard Gibb; Myron Coulter succeeded William Davis at Pocatello, and John Keiser ultimately assumed Barnes’ place in Boise. Each resigner held office about a decade, and four withdrawals within a year was said to be circumstantial; the Board admitted no length-of-service-policy. They had presided longer than many presidents, and all four found satisfying positions when they stepped down.

Dugger and Davis accepted presidencies in West Virginia and New Mexico, while Hartung remained in Moscow as a consultant when Barnes became a Northern Arizona University professor of higher education. Having earlier rejected several invitations for presidential candidacy, Barnes became a finalist for the chancellorship of the University of Nevada. However, he remained in Flagstaff, which he had considered for some time prior to his departure from Boise State.

Writing in July, 1975, to Laurence Walkup, president of Northern Arizona University, Barnes said that he was anticipating a one semester sabbatical in another year or so, which would provide an opportunity for writing while working with graduate students. Three months later, Barnes told Joseph Kauffman, professor of educational administration at Madison, Wisconsin, much the same thing. He expected to join Kauffman as a president who decided to recommit himself to teaching. In his fourteenth year at the time, almost nine at Boise State and five at Yuma, the challenges of a professorship appealed to him at age fifty-two.

A controversial and tenacious president, according to the press, Barnes looked forward not to retirement, but a change of pace. Leaving the door open for another administrative experience, he would find fulfillment while writing and conducting seminars. Meanwhile, there was considerable confusion, agitated somewhat by the media, before Barnes announced his resignation, and for a week or two thereafter. A number of sensitive issues had been appearing in print for some months, such as the civil complaint of a dozen members of the English Department, who were convinced that salaries should be much the same in each academic discipline. Sex discrimination in pay had also been charged, and faculty had rejected the administration’s meritorious service salary plan.

When the press featured him in a March, 1977, front-page story, Barnes confessed to Fred Venable, pastor of the First United Methodist Church, he was a “little gun shy” when youthful reporters requested interviews, because it was difficult to predict their conclusions. The press had led some people to believe Barnes was about to be dismissed by the Board, while certain articles were a tribute to his dynamic leadership. As for himself one theme had been conveyed, his conviction that every contribution one attempted to make had a measure of risk involved, nonetheless, the effort was worthwhile. Some of the frustrations of a university president were probably similar to those of a clergyman, Barnes told Venable.

The Statesman surmised in April that the Board, unhappy with certain maneuvers at Boise State, intended to reprimand Barnes. But, John Swartley and at least three other members denied this. “I stand behind John Barnes,” a colorful person who had been “flying pretty freely,” Swartley told the Statesman. A week later, the press announced Board approval of Barnes’ annual contract during a closed-door meeting in Pocatello; the following month newspapers across the state carried one version or another of his resignation.
According to the Post Register at Idaho Falls, Barnes felt he might be a bit more conservative in his dress and style if he had his ten years to do over again, but he would not change a single decision reached while steering the university to the position it held that spring semester. Writing to Edward Benoit shortly before submitting his formal resignation at the Board’s June meeting, Barnes restated his position regarding the proper relationship between a president and the governor’s trustees; the former must necessarily be a contestant as well as a partner. Unfortunately, differences of opinion were often exaggerated when they reached the public, and the motives for confrontations were seldom understood. Debate was necessary, Barnes reminded Benoit, who had opposed his three-year baccalaureate proposal, when confident individuals deliberated. Without it “we all become like mice, and our work would resemble theirs.”

Thanking the members of the Board for their friendship and guidance, Barnes acknowledged the tribute of former presidents of the Alumni Association, Alvard Kiler, Edward Hedges, William Ilett, James Dickey and the current one, Jack Adkins, a 1969 graduate. Writing to all of the department heads, he urged them to fight vigorously for student and faculty needs. Regretful were the temporary offices in remodeled off-campus houses, but the situation would be eased when the Science-Education building was completed. A newcomer when Barnes addressed the department chairpersons and deans was Thomas Stitzel, named head of the School of Business, after Charles Lein accepted the presidency of the University of South Dakota.

Ralph Comstock, fund-raiser for the fine arts center, Don Day and James McClary, trustees when he arrived in 1967, were toasted as John and Shirley Barnes prepared to depart, as were the other members of the University Foundation. Receiving a letter of appreciation was Roy Ellsworth, who had helped Barnes maintain his sight, which had improved a bit in recent years.

Asked for the circumstances surrounding the resignation, Board President A.L. Alford said that Barnes had not been pressured; he was not forced out as some people speculated. Days later the State Board accepted his resignation with regret, granting him accumulated annual leave from July to December. Swartley was appointed chairman of the committee responsible for the selection and interview of candidates wishing to succeed Barnes. Meanwhile, Richard Bullington was named acting president.

Bullington had been a close friend, colleague, and an outstanding executive vice president, Barnes told Del Weber, head of Arizona State’s College of Education. He had a “super way” with faculty, deans and students and in many ways he was “more highly qualified to be president than I ever was,” Barnes wrote, adding that he did not believe “Dick” would be interested in the job permanently, an assumption that proved to be valid.

A note of advice and instruction Barnes addressed to his assistant, Leland Mercy, contained this admonition; resisting proposals for major changes in his own assignments would be the better part of valor. “Dick” would not be a sit-in administrator, Barnes predicted, thus if he decided to restructure his role, Mercy should cooperate with Bullington and Gerald Wallace whole-heartedly.

Alumni, legislative, business and faculty friends hosted a farewell party at Hillcrest Country Club, where they presented Barnes with the keys to a handsome yellow and black sports car. Expressing his appreciation, he said that he was certain his interest in a well-rounded athletic program had not pleased every member of the Board. Nevertheless, he was convinced that football, basketball and other intercollegiate
sports were the "cement" needed to bind the community and university together. Bullington agreed, still he intended to stress academic improvements, while Swartley's search committee representing faculty, student government, business and the Legislature, sought applicants through the affirmative action procedures prescribed by law. 8

INTERIM ADMINISTRATION

The presidential selection process had been drawn out of the "crevices of secrecy" into the daylight of public scrutiny, readers of Focus were told in February, 1978; midway through the interim administration's year. Fortunately, Bullington and Wallace were spared personal involvement as they assumed their responsibilities. The school year started on a high note, with little transitional trauma or travail. Barnes had brought the institution forward with considerable aplomb, while sharing certain responsibilities with Bullington for nine of his ten years. Bullington, the logical leader who enjoyed the confidence of faculty and the State Board, assumed fully the presidential role, while the Swartley committee sifted through the credentials of numerous applicants.

Appointing committees headed by Kenneth Hollenbaugh, Charles Davis and James Wilterding, charged with the assessment of academic affairs and the University's future, Bullington formed another one, chaired by Patricia Ourada, which would recommend ways to strengthen women's athletics. Busy working with these groups, Wallace, Ruyle, Taylor, deans and department heads, he did not get the "lame duck feeling," Bullington recalled, until John Keiser was offered the presidency in February, 1978.

Days after the State Board asked Bullington to serve, he "hit upon a good idea," the press concluded in July, adding presumptuously that the administration would plot a course for the school over the coming decades. Academic programs were reviewed and future needs catalogued, but the next president was not compromised by intermediate plotting. Bullington's term would be a single year; if someone nominated him for the presidency he would ask for his name to be withdrawn, Bullington told a reporter. "I've never had an aspiration to be the president of a college or university." He preferred to oversee academic functions, as he had in the past.

Accentuating academic growth appealed to Student Body President Michael Hoffman, faculty Senate Chairperson Jerry Tucker and their colleagues. Carol Mullaney, president of the recently formed local of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), agreeing with the administration's thrust, said that her organization, representing over one hundred faculty, preferred a strong emphasis on scholarship, without ignoring building needs. The candidates for the presidency should be scholars in a traditional intellectual discipline.

Actually, Barnes and Bullington had told the State Board in April they intended to institute a more sophisticated periodic assessment of all instructional programs. Bullington implemented the evaluation process in August, appointing Hollenbaugh chairman of the committee responsible for the effort. Addressing the faculty toward the end of that month, days before fall classes began, Bullington cited the committee's charge, while stressing the need for increased emphasis upon the liberal arts. 9

In a rather lengthy August, 1977, letter addressed to John Barnes at Flagstaff, Bullington admitted that "every now and then it occurs to me that I am sitting in the
chair where the buck stops," and he did not enjoy that particular feeling. Referring to the debate concerning the construction of a multi-purpose pavilion, Bullington confessed he may have alienated the Bronco Athletic Association, because he had made it crystal clear that an arts and humanities building was his first priority. Nonetheless, he maintained an amiable relationship with the BAA leadership, and the pavilion was beyond the drawing boards when Keiser relieved Bullington. The academic structure remained on the shelf despite a not-so-subtle demonstration staged for legislators.

Invited to tour the campus, members of the Joint Finance Appropriations Committee were picked up at the State House one November morning in a tour firm’s double-decker bus. Brought directly to the food technology building, they were served a continental breakfast, while Bullington identified on a map the structures the state inherited when the institution entered the system and the buildings erected since then with funds derived from the sale of student revenue bonds. By comparison, state financed buildings were few. The legislators, Bullington told Barnes, "won’t forget that the state hasn’t gone broke" providing money for Boise State facilities.

Touring the worst and the best instructional buildings in small groups, the legislators entered the thirty-five year old theatre arts and music quarters where students were blowing horns, singing, and drumming, while banging away on drama sets. Holding their ears or shaking their heads, some of the visitors readily admitted the situation was atrocious. Yet, replacement funds were not appropriated, and administrators found themselves confronting declining enrollments, a problem that preempted the search for ways to improve the physical plant.

Disheartening since funding was tied to student body size, was the realization by January, 1978, that the university had experienced a nearly six percent drop in registration, and the attrition rate for freshmen was about forty percent. A leveling of the upward trend throughout the state and region, anticipated before Barnes left, was now apparent, and the procedures suggested to thwart the decline were exploited by the media. The Statesman speculated in March that battling campus factions were throwing their weight around in a leadership vacuum.

Executive Vice President Wallace and six deans, denying in a circular letter that harmony had been disrupted, stood by Bullington as did most of the faculty. Meanwhile, recruiting procedures and one of the deans were criticized in articles appearing in Focus, and the protesting editor was dismissed. Presuming to
understand the situation the downtown press said, "cool it," while advising the two or three individuals unable to reconcile themselves to leave. The intensive effort administrators were making to strengthen the university had revealed the need to improve counseling services, and positive steps were being taken to retain potential dropouts.  

While offering advice concerning little known problems, the press might have said more about the academic growth that was actually achieved. A philosophy department, the long-term goal of faculty in several related disciplines was in the offing, and the Board approved the implementation of a baccalaureate degree in physics. National League of Nursing accreditation for the four-year degree was anticipated, while interdisciplinary humanities studies had enhanced the liberal arts curriculum. Construction Management was growing, and ROTC’s first year had been moderately successful.

Student recruiting and football scouting tactics had irritated individuals and aroused emotions, yet Bullington was not off-base when he modestly concluded that the year had been one of continual development, wherein the natural momentum of a young institution with considerable vitality had been perpetuated. The administrators, buffeted but not bruised during their two semesters, shifted responsibilities without regret, Bullington returning to his former office, while Wallace would soon head Governor John Evans’ committee asked to evaluate Idaho’s public school system.

P R E S I D E N T S E L E C T E D

In February, 1978, students, faculty and administrators, about fifty people in all, dropped by the Lookout Room in the Student Union to meet, one at a time, the five candidates chosen by the presidential selection committee. Seven months had passed since the initial meeting in July, and nominations had been accepted until mid-October. Thereafter, five educators were selected before Christmas, and basic interviews were completed by January 15th. The February meeting was the final one, convened for the purpose of choosing the person for Board approval. The open forum held before the committee decided was unprecedented, since the traditional selection process had previously remained secret with the names of candidates made public, if at all, after the president was chosen.

The finalists, Frank Horton of Southern Illinois University, Robert Glenn from Northern Michigan University, Texas A & M’s David Maxwell, Wyoming’s Edward Jakabauskas, and Sangamon State University’s John Keiser, were chosen because they were academicians as well as successful administrators. Among the criteria set by John Swartley’s eighteen-member search committee was a commitment to excellence for both faculty and students, a notable teaching and research record, and high-level executive experience. The president was expected to have a balanced view regarding liberal arts, training for professions, vocational schools and service to the regional community. While it was not specifically articulated by the selectors, they implied that the president should also inspire admirable achievements in athletics.

One of the five finalists told students and faculty gathered in the Union that he would not accept the presidency until he knew more about BSU, because it seemed to him they were insisting on two people in one, an academician on the one hand and a promoter-politician on the other. When he admitted he was not terribly
tactful, the committee agreed, and chose the last of the candidates, who attracted the largest crowd. John Keiser closed his remarks with the observation that Boise appeared to be a preferable place to raise three sons, a familiar homily that appealed to some of his listeners as did his modesty. Considered equally if not better qualified than the other applicants, Keiser’s personality and his experience at a university located in a state capital, influenced the decision makers.

Prior to his selection the press speculated that history professor, John Keiser, age 41, who earned his doctorate at Northwestern University in Evanston, near Chicago, would strengthen BSU’s legislative relationships, expand graduate programs while cooperating with the other universities, and hope that the football team’s winning streak would continue. At Sangamon State, founded in Springfield, Illinois in 1970, public affairs had been emphasized, as they would be at Boise. A former football player, Keiser preferred excellence in athletics as well as academics, concluding that one suffered without the other. Intercollegiate athletics were vital because they appealed to people financially able to assist the University. Nonetheless, the balance in the public eye was uneven, thus he would emphasize academic development. Agreeing with this objective stressed by Bullington and Wallace, the selection committee said that Keiser’s mastery of administrative skills, and his ability to communicate with people, tilted the crucial votes in his favor.

Scheduled to begin his duties August 1st, Keiser and his wife, Nancy, remained in Springfield until mid-July. Keiser’s salary, between the $43,000 paid Moscow’s Richard Gibb, and Myron Coulter’s $40,000 at Pocatello, was little more than the amount he received as acting president at Sangamon State University. Entitled to academic rank, Keiser became a member of the History Department, and like his predecessors, he would teach a morning class each fall semester.

Considered a “young Turk” eager to instigate change after he joined the faculty at Eastern Illinois University at Charleston in 1965, Keiser had taught in Missouri for two years following the completion of his Ph.D. at Northwestern. On the winning side of a departmental squabble that challenged the chairman, Keiser left Charleston in 1970 to become a charter member of the history faculty at Sangamon, a new institution serving juniors, seniors and graduates. Interested in administrative procedures, he assisted with the drafting of certain amendments that increased student, faculty and staff participation in campus governance. Named Academic Vice President in 1971, while writing a history of Illinois (1865-1898), Keiser had grappled with problems similar to those that engaged Bullington, as both universities suffered growing pains.

“Keiser calls Sangamon and BSU Similar,” the Statesman reported a few days after he accepted the presidency. Jeffery Seward had learned during a telephone interview that Keiser grew up in Mt. Olive, Illinois, a small coal mining town about fifty miles northeast of St. Louis, Missouri, where he was born in 1936. An educator by the 1960s, he preferred the open admissions policies practiced at Sangamon and Boise State, but not “open exit.” Both schools had similar counseling, remedial and retention programs. Since they were located in capital cities, Keiser expected his experience in Illinois to be useful in Idaho, where rivalry between Boise, Moscow and Pocatello was neither disturbing nor surprising. If the three schools were not competitive “it would be kind of strange,” Keiser told Seward.

An editorial, “Welcome, Mr. Keiser,” reminded him that Boise State, with more students than any university in the state, also had more detractors. Among them were people who felt athletics received too much attention. Yet, BSU’s academic image was improving as was the recruitment of students without agitating
competitors, a major concern of the interim administration. Corresponding with Keiser during the spring, 1978, semester, Bullington mentioned consistent Chamber of Commerce endorsement, assuring him there was "no town and gown" problem in Boise.

Concerned about the institution’s future direction, and Keiser's administrative style, twenty-six department heads signed a three-page letter dispatched to Springfield in May. Expressing confidence in Bullington, they said that he had steered the university toward a new public image and self-concept. They also mentioned salary matters and other financial concerns, campus communication procedures, and the decision-making process.

Writing from Springfield, Keiser agreed that Bullington's leadership should earn the highest marks. He also accepted his correspondent's invitation to meet with them soon after his arrival in August. As for their inquiry regarding morale and cohesiveness, Keiser said he preferred the term collegiality rather than cohesiveness, based upon pride in being a member of a community of scholars who shared values seated in academic quality and achievement. Responding to their request for enhanced participation in the decision-making process, Keiser was non-committal, explaining that he must first hear the details of their proposal. This matter, the contested non-renewal of the News Bureau director's contract, unacceptable football scouting tactics, the Legislature's "One Percent Initiative," and the construction of a pavilion and a fine arts center, were among the many concerns awaiting Keiser's arrival in Boise, following a fishing vacation with his family in Wisconsin and Michigan.11

FALL SEMESTER, 1978

Pre-registration, adopted during the spring semester, gave continuing students an advantage over new and transfer registrants. The computerized system directed by Registrar Susanna Holz and Jack Bugge required students to meet with their advisors in April and set up their fall schedules. Incoming freshmen and transfer students accepted by June 15, were eligible to register a week later. Open registration, the walk-through process in the gymnasium in late August, was reduced to a single day. The system improved as kinks were ironed out, and students planning to return spring semester selected their classes in November.

Familiar with the registration system when he arrived, Keiser named Vice Presidents Bullington, Ruyle, and Taylor, Deans Keppler, Stitzel, Hart, Duke, Martin, Hollenbaugh and Vo-Tech's Miller, Librarian Tim Brown, Student Body President Rob Perez and the Faculty Senate's Jerry Tucker members of his Cabinet. People expecting a turnover were surprised. Keiser, unlike many new presidents, did not bring in his own staff. Finding the central administration to be quite successful and stable, Keiser preferred the retention of all of the experienced executives. His administrative assistant, Jackie Cassell, had managed the presidential office for both Eugene Chaffee and John Barnes.

Smaller than Barnes' Executive Council had been, the Cabinet previewed a preliminary draft of the speech Keiser was preparing for his first meeting with the faculty and staff. Turning to the deans, Keiser asked them to identify for the press the academic accomplishments of their schools. Public awareness of the quality of the education students were receiving for resources expended was one of the subjects Keiser addressed when he stood before the faculty several days before classes began.

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A resolute advocate of continuing education, Keiser told the faculty that graduates, regardless of their degree be it in chemistry, nursing, physical education or the liberal arts, should be proficient in communication skills. They should also understand public affairs, responding to the questions and issues as well-informed citizens. Additionally, graduates should acquire life-long learning skills, while mastering their discipline, academic, professional or vocational.

Keiser felt, in the fall of 1978, that the core curriculum for general education must be revamped. In so doing, consideration might be given to the establishment of a single baccalaureate degree, the Bachelor of Arts and Sciences, since there were no universal substantive differences between the bachelor of arts and the bachelor of science. The core, examined that fall, was revised in the spring, but the faculty curriculum committee preferred to offer two separate degrees. In the meantime, some people continued to advocate the division of the School of Arts and Sciences, headed by William Keppler soon to be assisted by English professor Margaret Peek.

Addressing the faculty in October, Keiser said that he felt even more strongly than he had in August that the core curriculum, divided into three categories, must serve to stimulate learning skills, offer a breadth of courses, and integrate certain studies. Some of the approximately two hundred courses then in the core might be combined or eliminated. The ad hoc committee would recommend revisions to both the University Curriculum Committee and the office of the president. Changing the core became the major academic objective of the new administration, while students, except the few who became directly involved, demonstrated a seriousness of purpose (despite some outbreaks of "Animal House" behavior) quite unlike the attitude of so many students during much of the previous decade.12

Voluntarily responding to overdue statutory edicts concerning the easement of public building access for the handicapped, Boise State installed an elevator in the forty-year-old administration building, and laid ramps beside steps. Boise City sloped sidewalk corners, and designed the new City Hall for wheelchair as well as ambulatory patrons. On campus, afflicted students who might benefit were
encouraged to enroll in Steve Wallace's adaptive physical education class. And student tutors were recruited to assist with the training of their chair-bound peers. Inspirational academic quadriplegic achievers, Joseph Karpach and Stephen Muffley graduated with honors. Joseph conquered law school in 1982 at Moscow. Also representative of the two hundred physically disabled students on campus was Kathi Petersen, who earned a degree in marketing.

A divertissement each fall for the handicapped and fit were Homecoming activities, attuned to the theme, "New Dimensions in Excellence" in 1978. The traditional downtown parade, previously abandoned, would not be revived for another year, but the burning of the "B" on Tablerock Mountain, fired by Sigma Phi Epsilon, once more kicked off the week-long celebration. Alumni were officially welcomed to campus by Keiser. Some of them attended the Great American Talent Show on Thursday, but the most popular event was Saturday's football game with the University of Idaho's Vandals. Defeating Weber State 14-13 two weeks before, and Idaho State Bengals 16-14 the previous Saturday, the Broncos thrilled the homecoming crowd with a 48-10 win over Moscow. Less exciting, but highly entertaining was the women's "powder puff" game, in which dormitory residents were pitted against the Greeks, followed that Thursday evening by Tau Kappa Epsilon vs. Intercollegiate Knights in the annual "Toilet Bowl."

Homecoming filled the pages of the Arbiter for a week or two. Thereafter, basketball games dominated the sports section, while Keiser's decision to renew Jim Criner's football contract, despite unethical scouting, elicited considerable
comment, largely positive. More controversial that fall was the Board’s imposition of a seventy-five percent faculty tenure quota, and state agency approval of pavilion plans, yet opposed by some students who resented the required fee increase. Alarming was voter approval in November of a measure limiting property taxes to one percent of the market value. While the universities were not directly funded with property tax revenues, it was feared that appropriations might be reduced to replace monies lost at the local level, and stringent budget exercises followed, while calamitous cut-backs were yet to be ordered by Governor Evans.

"A Streetcar Named Desire" was playing in December, when the presidential inaugural brought to campus individuals representing numerous colleges and universities. Flanked by Governor Evans and Trustee Janet Hay in the gymnasium following the processional, Keiser introduced his wife, Nancy, and sons John, Sam and Joe during his animated introductory comments. The committee headed by Charles Davis had started its study, one of the things Keiser mentioned in his address. Outlining certain steps being taken to weigh the university’s performance, he underscored the effort to increase the quality of the one-third of the curriculum called the “core.”

Students were preparing for final exams when the president was ceremoniously ushered in. Many of them had preregistered for the spring, 1979 semester, a landmark one for the institution. The core curriculum was reformed and the seven-story Education Building occupied. The construction of the long-sought multi-purpose structure for sports, concerts, and the appearances of personalities as well-known as Bob Hope and Billy Graham would begin, while determined strides were taken toward the realization of a performing arts center.