President Abbott Announces Retirement

President James W. Abbott says his 20-year career at the University of South Dakota is coming to an end. He announced at his State of the University address in September that he plans to retire in June 2018.

“This has been both the most rewarding — and the most demanding — job of my life,” Abbott said. “USD is positioned well for the future. We have a strong and growing enrollment, academic programs that are second to none, and Division I athletics.”

“I’m proud of my alma mater and all the progress we’ve made,” he said. “Now it is time for new leadership to take USD to the next level.”

Abbott is USD’s 17th president, the only alumnus to serve as president and the second longest-serving president in the university’s 155-year history. The 69-year-old Abbott became president of USD on July 1, 1997.

Abbott entered the president’s office with a budget of $90 million. Today the university’s budget is $215 million. Enrollment has grown from 7,448 to 10,261 students. The number of full-time faculty has grown from 393 to 436, while the staff has stayed the same at about 1,400.

Scholarships and financial awards to students have nearly tripled, from $6.5 million in 1997 to $24 million last year.

The USD endowment is six times larger, growing from $45 million to $258 million, thanks to two successful fundraising campaigns during Abbott’s tenure.

During the past 20 years Abbott has led a vigorous building campaign to repair and refurbish historical structures on campus and upgrade laboratories while adding these new buildings:

• Lee Medical Building (2008)
• Muenster University Center (2008)
• Beacom School of Business (2010)
• Coyote Village residence hall (2010)
• Wellness Center (2011)
• Sanford Coyote Sports Center and Track-Soccer Complex (2016)

In addition, the USD Discovery District, now under construction near University Center in Sioux Falls, will realize Abbott’s dream of turning university research into viable, commercial products, boosting the economy and providing research opportunities for USD students.

The district will expand on the success of the GEAR Center (Graduate Education & Applied Research) also located next to University Center. GEAR, built in 2009, supports applied research by the public universities in the state and is home to USD’s Biomedical Engineering doctoral program.
Gift to Sustainability Program Inspires Students

An original bust of iconic American writer and environmental philosopher Henry David Thoreau by South Dakota artist Richard Tucker has been donated to the University of South Dakota's sustainability program by USD graduate and Vermillion, South Dakota resident Mark Wetmore. The donation comes on the 200th anniversary of Thoreau's birth near Concord, Massachusetts. Wetmore commissioned Tucker to execute the sculpture.

According to Meghann Jarchow, USD assistant professor and coordinator of the sustainability program, the donated piece of art ideally symbolizes the mission and objectives of the program, and it will be displayed at the program's offices on the USD campus. “Thoreau's life and work exemplify striving for sustainability – both the environmental and social aspects of sustainability,” Jarchow explained. “Thoreau is well known for providing a foundation for environmentalism, and he contributed to environmental history and ecology.”

Mark Wetmore earned an undergraduate degree in 1971 from USD with double majors in geology and economics, and also earned an M.B.A. from USD in 1972. He traces his admiration for Thoreau to a humanities class he took during his freshman year at USD. “Thoreau’s respect for all life reinforced my own inclinations,” Wetmore noted. “This donation,” he added, “is a modest way for me to acknowledge my gratitude to USD for introducing me to Thoreau, and it also recognizes Meghann Jarchow's accomplishments, including developing and expanding the sustainability program. I believe it is important for students in the sustainability program to have a sense of the philosophical underpinnings of what they study. Henry David Thoreau is an important founder of environmentalism and the sustainability movement. He is an inspirational figure.”

Faculty and Staff Appreciation Days

There are two more USD faculty and staff appreciation events coming to the Sanford Coyote Sports Complex this month. The USD Coyote volleyball and football teams both have events this week.

There is a volleyball game on Friday, Oct. 13, with the Coyotes hosting in-state rival SDSU at 7 p.m. Faculty and staff can bring their USD IDs to the ticket booth for free admission for them and their families.

Faculty and staff also are invited to the football game Saturday, Oct. 14 at the DakotaDome. The Coyotes kick off against Indiana State at 2 p.m. Faculty and staff can get half price admission ($10 adults, $5 youth) for them and their families. Tickets can be purchased in advance by clicking here and using the promo code “GOYOTES2017,” or they can also be purchased on the day of the game with a staff ID.

For more information contact the USD ticket office at 605-677-5959.
University of South Dakota alumni Tom Brokaw and Robert Legvold will hold a book signing after their Oct. 18 public forum scheduled from 7-8:30 p.m. in Aalfs Auditorium on the USD campus. The event is free and open to the public. No tickets are required. Doors for the public forum open at 6 p.m.

Sponsored by the USD Department of Political Science, the event entitled *The New Cold War: The United States, Russia and a World of Differences*, will showcase a moderated conversation between Brokaw and Legvold as they discuss the United States’ relationship with Russia.


Brokaw, a native of Webster, South Dakota, is a 1964 graduate of USD. As anchor and managing editor of "NBC Nightly News" for 21 years, Brokaw received numerous honors, including the Edward R. Murrow Lifetime Achievement Award, the Emmy Award for Lifetime Achievement, and he was inducted as a fellow into the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences. His insight, ability and integrity have earned him a dozen Emmys and two Peabody and duPont awards for his journalistic achievements. He holds an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from USD awarded in 1980.

Robert H. Legvold is one of the country’s foremost experts in Soviet Union and Russian policy and has published numerous articles and books on the subject. He is the Marshall D. Shulman Professor Emeritus in the Department of Political Science at Columbia University, specializing in the international relations of post-Soviet states. He served as a director of Columbia’s Harriman Institute and also as a director of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace-sponsored Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative from 2009-2012. He is a member of various advisory boards, including those of the Committee on International Security Studies of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University, the Center for Global Politics at the Freie Universität Berlin, and the Foundation for International Peace and Democracy, led by Mikhail Gorbachev. He is a 1962 graduate of USD, and was also awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws in 1989.
Law School Task Force Makes Recommendation

The Law School Task Force voted last week to recommend to President James W. Abbott a hybrid plan to establish new programming options online and in Sioux Falls while keeping the existing School of Law on the University of South Dakota campus in Vermillion.

The task force also voted unanimously to recommend an increase in funding of at least $600,000 a year for programming at the law school.

The task force based its evaluation on the testimony it received in two previous meetings from students, faculty, law school staff, alumni, community members, lawyers from around the state and outside experts and consultants.

Abbott appointed the task force earlier this year to consider whether relocating the state’s only law school to Sioux Falls would be in the best interest of the students, the university and the state of South Dakota.

Rep. Mark Mickelson, R-Sioux Falls, chaired the task force.

The task force voted to recommend seeking private funding for scholarships and to recommend offering in-state tuition rates to select out-of-state candidates. The task force concluded with recommending the establishment of an ongoing advisory council to continue to consider ways to improve the law school.

The USD School of Law remains a best value law school and was recently ranked third in least indebted graduates. The school educates most of the state’s lawyers and judges, filling spots in private law firms and in public legal practice.

O’Connor Named July 2017 Employee of the Month

Candy O’Connor was named employee of the month for July. O’Connor is the senior secretary for financial affairs.

Cindy Brodsky, her co-worker in budget and finance, nominated O’Connor because of her high level of interpersonal skills. Brodsky said, “I often get a smile just listening to her when she is on the phone or greeting walk-in customers. She is an exceptional co-worker. She is especially good dealing with faculty and staff on the phone, via emails or in person. She communicates with a high level of professionalism.”

O’Connor appreciates her co-workers’ patience and professionalism, as well. When asked what her favorite part of her job was, she said, “The best part of USD employment is the enormous amount of knowledge to draw from when I have questions and the willingness and patience of my coworkers to assist me.”

O’Connor has been at USD for three years. Prior to that she worked at Vermillion Sanford for 12 years. Her time at Vermillion Sanford has prepared her for working with a wide range of people and her current co-workers can tell. Brodsky added, “At times, I am just amazed by how great she handles people on the phone. She is able to get the information to them with tact and accuracy. I think mainly Candy just tells it like it is. She is always kind and considerate when dealing with a variety of people.”
Donna Fedderson was named the USD September employee of the month. Fedderson is a custodian in East Hall. She was nominated by Tammy Goetz, along with other coworkers, for her commitment to USD. Fedderson has been a custodian all over campus, including: North Complex, the MUC and Dakota and Julian Halls with a combined total of 10 years working on campus.

In all, six different people provided quotes on why Fedderson should be chosen for employee of the month. Fedderson's experience as a custodian on campus ensures a thorough job every time. One coworker from Julian Hall said, “Donna is genuinely concerned about the appearance of our building and cares deeply about all of us who work in this building. Donna has brought the 'shine' back to it. She goes above and beyond daily and is extremely considerate of her timing in accomplishing her tasks.”

Fedderson's efficiency isn't the only reason she was nominated. Fedderson said her favorite part of the job was the people she was able to work with and her coworkers feel the same way. Another coworker said, “Donna is warm, friendly, genuine and funny. I look forward to seeing her each day when I come to work. Donna is dedicated to her service to all of Julian Hall and the greater department here at USD.”

Fedderson has a reputation as an avid USD fan, which means she loves USD as much as all of her coworkers at USD love her. Yet another coworker said, “Donna has been a friend and comrade since my first day in Julian Hall in October 2014. She checks in weekly, wondering about professional and personal matter we've discussed. She is an avid fan of USD sports and will stop by with play-by-play highlights if she knows you've missed the game.”

When Fedderson isn't at work or checking the score for USD athletics, she is spending time with her grandkids and her family.

Popular rapper Macklemore will perform at the Sanford Coyote Sports Center Oct. 31 at 8 p.m. USD students can get tickets for $15 and the community is able to buy them for $48 at www.usdticketsonline.com. The concert is organized by the Campus Activities Board and USD.