

**2016 State of the University**  
**Remarks by President James M. Danko**

Good afternoon and thank you for joining us today for what is my sixth State of the University address. I am honored to be with you. Please know that the privilege and opportunity to lead Butler University is something I am thankful for every day.

I am pleased to report that the state of our University is strong. Before I share highlights on our progress, I would like to recognize the members of the Class of 1966, who are celebrating their 50th reunion this weekend.

I'd also like to recognize the trustees who are here with us, and to thank them for the incredible service they provide to our University.

I'd like to recognize those of you who will be honored at tonight's Alumni Recognition Awards. If you are accepting an award tonight, could you please stand so we can recognize you?

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my wife Bethanie and thank her for the service she provides to our university. I am a much better president and person with her at my side.

My thanks to Blaine Zimmerman who opened today's event. Bethanie and I first met Blaine last year at a luncheon we hosted for our students who are veterans. This event was suggested by Judy Clark, in our Financial Aid Office. Although Judy could not be here today, I'd like to acknowledge her because in my view, her dedication is not only representative of the great work happening behind the scenes by our talented staff to support our University and students, but Judy's efforts have also supported the recognition Butler recently received from *U.S. News and World Report* as one of the Best Colleges for Veterans.

Allow me to share some background on Blaine. About a decade ago, he was a stellar track athlete attending Indiana State University on a full athletic scholarship. Then one

day, an injury put an end to his college running career. This was devastating, not only because he loved to run, but because it left him without a way to pay for college.

However, Blaine was determined to complete his degree, so he chose a path he hoped would push him to new heights and pay for his education. Blaine enlisted in the U.S. Army, and a year later, he deployed to Iraq, and later Afghanistan, where he saw seven of the men in his company killed, including five of his friends.

It agonized Blaine to think of his young wife, Ginny, back on the military base in New York with their first child Wes. But Blaine forged on, knowing that he had to stay focused on keeping himself and his fellow soldiers safe.

When Blaine returned to the United States, he completed his undergraduate education while confronting the challenge of transitioning to civilian life. Having seen other soldiers struggle with the transition, he wanted to set himself up for success. So he applied for Butler's MBA program, was accepted and enrolled, and is on track to complete his degree in May. As he earns his degree, Blaine also works full time as a software trainer; raises three kids with Ginny; and volunteers as a mentor to help other veterans transition out of the service.

We're proud to have Blaine as part of the Butler community, and we're honored that he and his wife, Ginny, are with us this afternoon. On behalf of the Butler community, I want to thank you for your courageous service to our country.

I'm sharing Blaine's story because it represents many of the values we cherish at Butler—perseverance, humility, service, teamwork, and community. Certainly, courage and confidence are an important part of the equation in Blaine's life, and they are attributes I suggest we keep in mind as key stakeholders responsible for the future of Butler University.

While Blaine's courage and confidence are certainly evident to a different degree and in a different context, I believe it is imperative that we at Butler demonstrate courage and

confidence as we confront the very real challenges facing higher education institutions in an era of increasing competition for enrollment, unprecedented scrutiny over costs, and questions in the national dialogue of whether college is “worth it.”

I am proud of the fact that over the past few years, when we could have just as easily kept our heads down and continued to do things the same way as always—hoping that the storm would pass and we’d weather it—we instead had the confidence to invest deeply in the type of education we believed was right for our students. While preserving critical philosophical elements that are central to a Butler education and the Butler Way, we had the courage to innovate and change both inside and outside the classroom, and the confidence to invest in differentiating Butler as a premier, nationally-recognized University.

I am thankful to the leadership of our board and the tremendous support of the broader Butler community for the courage and confidence it has taken to set Butler on a trajectory of growth at a time when higher education is confronting difficult challenges.

As we consider the present and our future, let us reflect for a moment on how we got here. It was only three years ago that an important milestone occurred in the evolution of what is now commonly known as Butler 2020. In June 2013, nearly 70 members of the Butler community gathered in the Johnson Board Room to discuss the future direction of our University. From that conversation, a Vision Statement and six key words eventually emerged to encapsulate the actions that we, as a 21st century, urban university, should aspire to live out.

These words—commit, integrate, engage, prepare, support, and evolve—were the foundational elements of what has become Butler’s strategic plan. It has become, in essence, a roadmap for our broader ambition—to not only keep pace as a strong regional university, but to emerge as a national university with best-in-class academics, a robust career pipeline, a thriving community, exciting athletics, and impressive campus amenities to better serve students. It was born out of collaboration and bold thinking from this faculty and staff. I am proud of the fact that our community has demonstrated

the confidence to pursue our vision, especially during challenging times in higher education as well as within our own University.

Consider that when I spoke to the community during last year's address, we had just emerged from a Board of Trustees meeting where we confronted some challenging financial realities—and made the difficult decision to cut budgets while staying on course in pursuit of our vision.

Just 16 months ago, in June 2015, as the result of two successive years of smaller-than-expected incoming classes, and a lower number of returning students, we were facing a \$5 million deficit for last year. Members of this community worked tirelessly to reduce our budget. Eventually, our Board approved a university budget, despite anticipating an operating loss. The Board had the confidence we would soon start to see the positive impact from the strategy we had put in place, one that was investing heavily into our campus.

Well, I am pleased to report that we finished last year under budget and, in fact, with over \$1 million to the positive side with no deficit spending, providing us with the extra resources critical to pursue our vision.

Now, let's dial the clock ahead to this year. This past January as we began the budget process for our current academic year, many of our faculty and staff will recall that the smaller student enrollment at Butler, and a considerable increase in financial aid, had us facing an \$8-10 million deficit. Once again, the community took up the challenge of operating more efficiently by reducing our budget, while accelerating our efforts to attract new students to Butler.

I am pleased to report, thanks to the concerted efforts of our community and the confidence to stay the course with our strategic plan and vision, in August we welcomed the largest first-year class in Butler's history. In addition, our retention rate of returning students has seen a notable increase across all student cohorts—sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Finally, we are coming off our best year—far and away—in the history of

our Advancement efforts with a total of nearly \$45 million raised.

As a result, rather than running a large budget deficit this year, we now anticipate having our best financial results ever, well on the positive side. I thank everyone for your extraordinary efforts and confidence. I especially want to thank our great team in Finance and Administration for their meticulous work in keeping us on the straight-and-narrow when it comes to our budget and finances.

Indeed, it has taken courage and confidence to reach this point in our history. We have much to celebrate as an institution, from our new facilities, to our *U.S. News and World Report* ranking as the most innovative university in the Midwest, and overwhelmingly positive evidence from a recent Gallup poll that has Butler ahead of peer and aspirant universities on the impact a Butler education has on the lives and careers of our alumni.

However, as we build our national profile, it is critical to keep academic achievement and high-quality, experience-based programs at the top of our priority list as an institution. That's why I'm proud to note that as we've made progress broadly as an institution, much of that progress has been driven by the excellent work taking place in each of our six colleges. There are a number of milestones worth noting, but let me mention just a few:

This year our College of Business became the Andre B. Lacy School of Business with a \$25 million gift from LDI Chairman Andre Lacy and his wife Julia. The generous gift from the Lacy's marks the largest ever contribution from an individual or family and signals a vote of confidence in the school's direction. Even more powerful, perhaps, is that this gift came from a distinguished member of our community who is not an alumnus of the university. That makes for an even more powerful validation of our efforts.

The College of Education, meanwhile, has maintained a 100 percent job placement rate for its graduates and has continued its successful collaboration with the Indianapolis Public Schools on the Reggio-inspired Butler Lab School and Shortridge High School. In

addition, the College has led the cross-disciplinary “One Butler: The Brain Project.” This yearlong initiative fosters a collective exploration of the brain, examining it through the lens of neuroscience and the impact this field of study has on all dimensions of our lives.

The College of Communication is playing an important role in advancing the community dialogue around key issues. For example, at a time of heated national debate over issues like race and community, the College of Communication drew more than 1,200 attendees to a symposium on those topics, attracting major speakers like Indiana Fever star Tamika Catchings and ESPN analyst Jay Bilas. The College’s two-year-old Sports Media major also continues to grow, with 55 students in the major, and the number rising.

The Jordan College of the Arts was crucial to the successful establishment of The Butler Arts Center over the past year. This professionally managed, multi-venue Center—which effectively consolidates Clowes, Schrott, Lilly, and Eidson-Duckwall into one seamless resource—marks a new era for the arts at Butler. This approach prioritizes academic programming, and creates more opportunities for JCA students and faculty with enhanced public performances within the Butler community and our region.

Our College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences continues to focus on creating opportunities for graduates to distinguish themselves in an increasingly competitive job market. The College has partnered with the Lacy School of Business to establish the new Healthcare and Business major. This innovative program is designed to prepare Butler students for a wide range of graduate-school options and career paths within healthcare-focused industries, where more jobs are being created than in any other sector of the U.S. economy.

And here to highlight a great program in our College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, is Butler alumna and Psychology Professor Tara Lineweaver.

In addition to the great work happening in our Colleges, many other areas of our campus—including within the Academic Affairs Division, Information Technology, and

the Libraries—continue to advance our educational mission.

Butler’s Center for Academic Technology relocated to Irwin Library in an area designed to support innovation in the use of instructional technologies. Features include a demonstration theater for small-group workshops, a mediated “huddle space” for collaboration, and a “launch pad” area for trying out new technologies.

Moving for a moment from the intellectual to the physical, Butler is fortunate to have an outstanding and vibrant Health and Recreation Complex where many Butler community members, including nearly 90 percent of our students, participate in a range of intramurals, club sports, and health and wellness programs and activities. It is a credit to our HRC and our Health Services staff that Butler was recently ranked No. 6 on a list of Healthiest Colleges in the United States.

We also take great pride in our Athletic programs, especially the way they enhance the education and development of our students, as well as the recognition they bring to our University. This past year, the Women’s Soccer and Softball Teams were the first Butler teams to win BIG EAST titles. In addition, the Men’s Basketball Team advanced to the round of 32 in the NCAA tournament.

Of course, our student-athletes never lose sight of the fact that they are first-and-foremost students. We take pride that in the spring semester, 266 student-athletes achieved at least a 3.25 GPA with 38 individuals earning a 4.0 GPA.

Such accomplishments are even more notable when considering the difficult year it’s been in our Athletics family.

In January, we lost alumnus Andrew Smith after his long and public battle with non-Hodgkin lymphoma and leukemia. A month later, our Assistant Basketball Coach Emerson Kampen lost his 6-month-old son, affectionately known as “Baby Em.” Then this past August, we lost Joel Cornette, another former basketball player who left a legacy not only on the court, but on all those around him.

Indeed, stories of the Butler community coming together to support one another extend far beyond the boundaries of our campus. Butler's sense of family runs deep within its alumni networks, and that is something of which we're tremendously proud. There are countless stories about the ways Butler alumni are shaping their communities and families, while changing society for the better.

And what's heartening for us to know, too, is that our alumni are proud of Butler.

This year's results from the Gallup-Purdue Index, a national survey of college graduates who received their degrees from 1950–2015, showed that Butler excelled, compared with peer, aspirant, and national institutions, when considering alumni assessment of faculty support, opportunities for experiential learning, and affinity for their alma mater.

For example, 82 percent of Butler grads agree that Butler was the perfect school for them—a rate 15 percent higher than the national average—and 94 percent agree their professors made them excited to learn. Eight in ten Butler grads also agree that they are in careers and jobs in which they are deeply interested, something the survey suggests was dependent upon their positive college experience.

We should truly take pride in the clear evidence that Butler excels when compared with aspirant and national institutions. These numbers are powerful—and should be attributed to the hard work that all of you do to make Butler an outstanding place.

There are countless examples of graduates of Butler who have gone on to great success in their careers and in their lives—individuals who are making a positive impact in the world.

I am encouraged and heartened by all we have to celebrate as a community. But we also have to look—with courage and confidence—to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead of us. Which brings me back to the Butler 2020 Vision.

As mentioned, this plan is, in essence, a roadmap for bringing the broad vision of excelling as a national university to fruition. We have set goals for advancing our reputation, increasing enrollment, enhancing infrastructure, improving student engagement and outcomes, and pursuing innovation in academic programs. I'm excited to share a few brief highlights of the ways we're executing on this vision:

This fall we welcomed 1,255 first-year and 81 transfer students to the Butler campus, the largest incoming class in our history. While this large class size presented new challenges for us, I'm proud of the way the campus community rallied to identify creative solutions to the additional load put on housing, faculty, and student services. I think I can speak for all of us when I say that seeing the smiles on our new students' faces and sensing their excitement during move-in day was worth the effort.

This year we also made significant progress towards our strategic objective of developing our infrastructure. It was just a couple years ago during this address that I shared a fly-through, preview video of campus changes that were on the horizon. Those improvements have now become a reality—with the completion of the Sunset Avenue streetscape beautification project, which has significantly enhanced our campus entrance and eliminated street-parking congestion, and a new parking garage which has also provided space for dining amenities on campus, with Scotty's Dawghouse the first of what we expect to be four new restaurants.

Fairview House opened this semester and is now home to 633 students. It is a first, significant step forward in addressing our overdue need to provide our students with more contemporary housing. I am pleased to report that the progress towards our vision will continue thanks to the approval last month by the Board of Trustees to proceed with three other major projects.

The most immediate project is a second new residence facility which will replace Schwitzer Hall. While we have considered multiple ways to renovate, or integrate Schwitzer into a new facility, the options were not viable to provide a building conducive

to the best interests of future Butler students, especially when considering accessibility issues and the community space desired to support a Butler education. As most of you know, we are salvaging equipment and materials from the building, and will also reclaim some of the decorative limestone from the building for re-purposing.

Moving beyond residence halls, a key strategic priority is to improve our academic facilities on campus. There are two projects, for business and science education, approved for which construction documents are now being prepared. While subject to the timing of our fund-raising efforts, we hope to break ground on these projects as early as next summer.

The Lacy School of Business will have a new state-of-the-art home built adjacent to the library and Fairview House, a facility that will address the fact that half of all business classes are now taught outside of the current Holcomb building due to space constraints and in support of undergraduate business enrollment, which has increased 60 percent in the last five years.

In addition, a new science building and atrium will be built and connected to renovated and modernized buildings, Gallahue Hall and Holcomb, thereby providing an exceptional new complex for the sciences to keep pace with the growing demand for the sciences at Butler. Our Biology program, for example, has seen a 30 percent increase in applications over the past year alone.

Allow me at this point to acknowledge the hard work of our Facilities, Building Services, Maintenance, and BUPD teams that are not only helping to bring these new facilities to life, but who work hard every day to keep our campus beautiful and safe.

While all of our campus improvements are important to the realization of our vision, the most crucial aspect of all this, is what's occurring inside these buildings. It's the *people* who live and work and learn at Butler—whether on campus, in Indianapolis, or around the world—that give meaning and purpose to our educational mission.

While we can be proud of the many positive things happening on our campus, especially when it comes to transforming our students, it is important to keep in mind the increasing challenge—as well as our responsibility—to meet the needs and concerns of *all* students, no matter what their background. As we strive to be recognized as a prominent national, and even international university, we must be a community where a wide range of people—from different races, ethnicities, sexual orientation or gender identities, economic backgrounds, religions, and more—can positively and respectfully interact with, and learn from, one another.

Our country, as is evident in our current political and social discourse, as well as the violence occurring across this nation, continues to cope with a history of discrimination and oppression. Today, our college students, including right here at Butler, continue to live with the very real consequences of that history. Despite the progress we have made as a nation, we have much work to do to become a truly just society.

Butler's heritage as an institution founded by abolitionists and as the first college in Indiana to admit women and men on an equal basis, places us in a strong position to assume leadership on important issues of discrimination. It is incumbent upon us, as Butler University community members, to be leaders of dialogue, pathfinders to solutions, and models of civility. This leadership can be assumed by any and all of us, including faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

In preparing a presentation of this type, my hope was to briefly highlight a number of issues. However, given the constraints of time and venue, it is not possible to go in-depth on some of the more important ones, for example, our University finances.

Therefore, we have scheduled a number of forums where we can do just that in the coming weeks. I encourage, especially our faculty and staff, to participate. As you look at the topics, some may be obvious, but let me comment on why the others.

As we move into this academic year, we must continue the positive momentum we've built in pursuing our vision and in achieving the nine strategic objectives we have

developed.

In fact, the “Champions” of those objectives continue their work and we are monitoring our progress.

Reflecting, and then acting, on our opportunities and obstacles is critical to sustaining our forward momentum. This is where we truly need the active engagement of you all in helping us to improve, and I am going to ask that you take some time to reflect and share your thoughts, questions, and ideas.

From my perspective, there are four areas I would highlight as in need of focused effort and energy.

The first I have already referenced, and that is the need to improve our campus environment and dialogue when it comes to diversity and inclusivity. Fully respecting and supporting all community members while not tolerating unacceptable behaviors based on race, religion, gender identity, or any other form of discrimination.

Secondly, we must accelerate our efforts to advance new ideas and support innovation. We have made good progress these past few years, but we cannot let up. In fact, we need to do better. You will be hearing more about our plans to further support innovation at the forum schedule later this month.

Third, and something I highlighted last year, we must continuously work to create an inspired workplace and positive culture. Our people are our most important asset. In our HR/Culture forum, we will discuss the results from some workplace surveys we’ve undertaken, and highlight areas where we can improve.

Finally, no matter how often we meet as a community, such as today, or hold forums and Town Halls, or send community messages, we can never do enough to fully communicate the work, challenges, and changes at a university of this size. Our senior leaders on campus, including myself, will take seriously the challenge of enhancing and

improving communication across our community.

You were given some cards when you arrived and I would ask you to take a few minutes now to share your own ideas and questions.

In the spirit of innovation, I know firsthand this hall is filled with individuals that have great ideas, whether those ideas are to improve upon something we already do or help us create something new. As part of our innovation efforts, we want to create a pipeline of ideas, and we want to start that process today—right now, in fact.

So, I would ask that you please take a moment and find the cards you were handed upon entering the building today. Over the course of the next two minutes, I would like for us to all pause and think about the opportunities and obstacles that surround us at Butler University. Then, using one of the notecards, write down an idea you have for Butler to either seize an opportunity or overcome an obstacle.

If you are comfortable doing so, please indicate your name on your note card so we can follow-up with questions we may have about your idea. Please set your card aside and be sure to drop it off in the lobby basket as you leave today.

As we prepare for the Town Halls, we want to know the topics and question that are important to you. Once again, please retrieve the cards you were handed. On the second notecard, please spend a moment and write down one question about the University you would like addressed at one of the scheduled Town Halls, shown behind me.

As with the first card, please be sure and leave this card in the lobby baskets as you exit today.

As I close this afternoon, I want to address something that some of you might have thought throughout the speech. That is, the question of why. Why does it matter for Butler to strive to be a top-flight university? Why not settle for the easier path? Why is it necessary to summon courage and confidence?

You will notice you have one note card left. In the next few minutes, I'd like you to write down one way in which you can be more courageous and confident in the next year, and think about how you can use that courage to strengthen the Butler community.

Now please do me a favor. Take this card with you as you leave today. Place this card in an office drawer, tuck it in your favorite book. Put it in a place where you won't lose it—maybe even in a place where you'll find it unexpectedly. Because there will surely be a time this academic year where you'll need that card. It might be a time when you feel depleted of courage. Or you might just be bogged down by monotony and need some inspiration.

In any case, you can use this card as a reminder of why we all do what we do at Butler each and every day. And draw from them a sense of courage that what you do—what we all do—matters.

Thank you all for being part of this gathering. While I cited many different areas and divisions today, it is impossible to single out every one of them. Please know just how grateful I am for the hard work and dedication that all of you do on behalf of Butler University.

Thank you, enjoy the rest of this Homecoming weekend, and GO DAWGS!