Good afternoon and thank you for joining me today as we take time to review the past year and celebrate our successes together. As I contemplated this past year, I couldn’t help but draw some parallels between my role and that of a coach.

In the World Cup, a coach prepares the team to play. Most athletes are highly motivated, just as I know ya’ll are motivated to serve students. My role as your coach is to generate excitement, encourage collaboration and recognize and celebrate new and innovative ideas. That’s what today is all about. Celebrating our ideas. And our stories….stories like Cassandra’s.

Cassandra is a single mom who spent much of her life in foster care. Students like her aren’t on the radar for most of us. Young adults who have experienced foster care have been dealt a tough hand. They are more likely to go to jail, be jobless or homeless than they are to earn a college degree.

But Cassandra was determined to pursue higher education. She graduated last month and credits the Impact Scholars Program for helping her reach her goal. Under the energetic and creative management of Anna Moreshead in the Office of the Dean of Students, this is a brand new program and the only one of its kind in Idaho, with strong institutional support, a dedicated position, and established outcomes. As Anna connects with colleagues across the state, they look to our program as the inspiration for creating their own programs.

Our stories aren’t just about students. In the spring of 2013, we launched Faces of Student Affairs on our website. These are your stories and they give us all a chance to get to know each other outside of work. How well do you think you know your co-workers?

Did you know we have someone on staff that was the FIFA president’s personal assistant during the 2002 World Cup soccer match between Brazil and Germany in Yokohama, Japan? Who was a professional dancer and comedian? Who do you think was the Rodeo Princess? There is someone in our division once ranked 7th on a list of India’s professional badminton players. Someone else plays the piano like a professional concert pianist and even writes his own music. Any guesses?

We also have a therapy dog trainer, a synchronized swimmer, and a scuba diver. Curious? Go to Faces of Student Affairs on our website to find out more. A huge thank you to Sandy Friedly (Freedly) and Teresa Church for their efforts in helping us to get to know each other with their work on this initiative.

Student Affairs stories also include research. Debbie Kaylor and the Career Center staff are involved in discovering which abilities employers are seeking when they interview college graduates. Findings identified nine skills employers’ desire, underscoring national research and supporting the notion that Student Affairs functions and student engagement with the University contributes to the employability of our graduates. Debbie and her staff are sharing this information in the Make College Count presentation at Orientation. Students and families are already responding quite positively.

Speaking of Orientation I’m hearing good things from students and families about your presentations and the friendliness of our University. What made the difference? We had a plan going in. Like any good team prepares for a big game, we prepared for orientation. We conducted evaluations, trainings, practiced and improved. When it was game time, we were ready. The sessions I’ve attended this summer are better than anything we’ve done before.
Bronco Welcome had some new stories to tout this year. Not the least of which was students setting a Guinness World Record for the “longest distance traveled on a slip and slide in one hour.” This was something students really wanted to do and we helped them get it done.

Y’all, when you have that blue field you just have to capitalize on it. That’s exactly what Sarah Shinn and her team did with B on the Blue last August. In case you missed it: after Convocation new students and their families marched across campus to the stadium. Led by the cheerleaders and the Blue Thunder Marching Band we filed into the stadium and filled in a giant B. This was a very creative and unique campus-wide collaboration. What better way for the Class of 2017 to begin their college career and for us to begin a new tradition of B on the Blue?

Our stories aren’t only limited to campus. ESPN featured our rooftop Bee Farm and Garden during a football game last fall. On top of the Student Union, student interns raise bees and grow organic produce. Sold exclusively to the Bookstore, 100% of proceeds earned from the honey goes back into the internships to buy new equipment, educational and research materials, and the Boise River Café buys all the produce. A folk, this program benefits the entire campus community. No wonder ESPN wanted to showcase it.

Sometimes the story seems to be about remodeling but it’s really about service. When we remodel and combine departments, we’re able to provide better services to students. It’s not just about aesthetics. A perfect example of this is the Student Union remodel.

The contemporary design of the Information Desk increases visibility from different angles of entry into the Student Union. Guests to campus benefit from friendly, well-trained staff who can help direct them to their destination. Incorporating Bronco Card Services with the Information Desk gives students access to staff who can assist with everything from ID processing to buying football tickets in one location.

Additionally, giving students access to service and staff who can assist across several functions sometimes includes asking two offices to remodel and share space. In January 2014, the DRC and Veteran Services combined their look by moving into a new space (formerly the Parking office) in the Lincoln garage and now assists student with a combined front desk operation and some shared facilities. So far, the result has been an inviting and inclusive experience for our students.

The goal of all of our services, of course, is helping students graduate. So the end of the year celebrations are always meaningful stories for me. I’ve attended many of these events in my career and this year’s were just outstanding. It’s wonderful how they continue to grow.

The Golden Apple Awards and the Campus Awards Ceremony hit whole new levels. The Greek Week talent show was the best I’ve seen. The Graduating Student Leaders Celebration has grown to include nominations from all over campus and has become a signature event for graduation season. There are two programs I want to talk about a little more because they’re newer and serve some of our underrepresented populations.

The 2nd Annual Rainbow Graduation honored LGBTQ and Allied graduates and 24 grads received rainbow cords. This team effort, led by the Women’s Center, Housing and Residence Life, and the student group The Pride Alliance, had additional support from ASBSU and Student Involvement. Kudos to Kate Steven, Jess Caldwell-O’Keefe, and Adriane Bang. This program not only makes marginalized identities visible but also celebrates them at Boise State University.

New this year for first generation students the First Forward Graduation Celebration was much bigger than we expected. 132 students attended and another 38 picked up cords. Student Justin
Baxter came up with the idea and he, along with Ro Parker, Maria Elena Martinez from the MLK Committee, and support and guidance of Francisco Salinas made it happen.

What really made it special to the students was that family members, friends and mentors were onstage to present them with the cord. The students felt truly honored and validated and were able to share the honor with the people who helped them. Is that not the best example of inclusive excellence?

On the recruitment side, we visited more high schools, spoke to more students, and invited more visitors to campus this year. We even took the show on the road in a new way as we showcased the Boise State student experience across the West. A point of gratification for me is to see the joint efforts of the Admissions Office and Student Diversity and Inclusion to re-energize outreach in Idaho to make sure we’re bringing underrepresented populations to campus.

Of particular importance to the health and sustainability of our institution was the Scholarship Task force that culminated efforts towards student recruitment. Our voice in this deliberation was eloquently represented by Renee Rehder, who not only made sure that our students were well served, but also constructed a most skillful strategy for a technical and intentional communication system that will be implemented in 2014-15. Ramon Silva was another powerful force for students and our efforts in Student Affairs on this task force.

And, speaking of money, this spring we set aside funds to establish the Student Emergency Fund in the Office of the Dean of Students. It provides short-term assistance for students who encounter unexpected, financial hardships: nine $400 awards were given out. One recipient was the sole provider for her family and her husband needed emergency surgery, which necessitated that she take time off from her part-time job – and finals week – to care for him. The application asks, “What are your options if you don’t get this funding?” Her response: “I basically just start packing because my family will have to find another place to live. Probably a shelter.”

Finally, the story that has affected nearly everyone in the room for more than a year is Program Prioritization. You have spent hour upon hour gathering data, analyzing your programs, discussing your priorities, thinking about your practices, summarizing results and putting forth your best effort. Thank you. Thank you for all of the work you did. Thank you for showing our administration the depth of your ability to be self-evaluative. Thank you for accepting this exercise in the serious manner that our Board expected. And, thank you for presenting me with the honor of representing our division in a way that shows us at our best. I can’t thank you enough for all your energy and passion. Dr. Kustra is very impressed with the time, effort and detail of our report.

I’ve shared many stories with you today. I hope they’ve inspired you as much as they have me. I look forward to the next year and all the new stories we create together. Something that is just a spark of an idea today may become something great.

Inspired by the World Cup, I’ll borrow a single word from the world of soccer to describe my appreciation and admiration for the past year’s accomplishments. Will you all help me with this?

GOOOOOOAALLLLLLL!