Boone Science Hall Renovation Phase II
Remarks by Dr. James Smith
February 21, 2013

Mr. President, Madam Chairman, Dr. Packard, Lyle Stanford’s family, ladies and gentlemen and especially the members of the science faculty:

Thank you very much for the kind remarks and this warm and wonderful reception. It is a real pleasure to have the opportunity to make a contribution to the Boone Science Hall renovation. Boone Hall had not yet been built when I was a pre-med student here from 1960-64. It came along a little later but has contributed to the education of a number of you here this evening. During my tenure here our biology science classes were held in the basement of Kirkpatrick Gymnasium which is now, I believe, the Student Union. Chemistry classes were held in Covell Hall and math and physics classes were in Sterry Hall. I recall those days with very fond affection. We didn’t know how meager our science facilities were and I am not sure we would have much cared if it had been pointed out to us. The old basement labs and classrooms had a lot of “character.”

Unbelievably, those days were 50 years ago but the vivid memories linger as though they were yesterday. I had a wonderful time in college here at The C of I. I and a number of my fellow students were here because we wanted to be prepared for admission to medical school or post-graduate science programs. It was well known throughout southern Idaho that the College had a science faculty second to none. It was also well known that if you did well in your classes and got a favorable recommendation from the science faculty, particularly “Doc” Stanford, you would be on your way to medical school. I was fortunate enough to do well and get the favorable recommendations, and I was accepted into the several medical schools to which I applied. After leaving the College I spent four years at the George Washington University School of Medicine and then another eight years, which included a couple of years in the Navy, at the UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles.

I ran into some excellent teachers and very fine instructors in each of these places, but I can tell you that the finest teachers that I had the privilege of learning from were right here at The College of Idaho. I almost get a little teary when I think back on the effort that the biology faculty put forth on my behalf. I would say that Dr. Lyle Stanford was not only the best instructor that I ever encountered but also one of the finest human beings. I am so very pleased that the Biology Teaching Lab will be named in his honor. That truly is most appropriate for this wonderful man and teacher. It is with satisfaction that I note three of Lyle Stanford’s children are here tonight. Allan was not too far behind me in the biology program and we had the fun of sharing a Mexico Biology Field Trip during the summer of 1963. I would say to each of the three of you on behalf of a “whole bunch” of biology students from the Stanford years: “THANK YOU”. You shared your Dad with us and for that we are truly appreciative. He came in early and stayed late and whenever you needed his help
you would find his door open and his cheerful countenance greeting you with a
smile. He did every thing he could to help us with whatever problems we thought we
had. I am humble and almost a little embarrassed when I think back on how hard he
worked to teach us, mentor us individually and push us toward success, and how
little he was paid and what I suspect were the meager benefits he received. As I
think back, I never saw him really angry and I never saw him lash out at a student
no matter how richly it may have been deserved. Lyle Stanford was a unique and
wonderful man whose qualities have become more illustrious to me as I have had 50
years to compare him to many, many others. Allan, Louden, and Jan thank you for
sharing and thank you for being here tonight.

Let me turn my attention to Dr. Patricia Packard, who is here this evening. Dr.
Packard was a superb botanist and had been a student of Lyle Stanford’s prior to
returning to her alma mater on the biology faculty. I believe she admired “Doc”
Stanford as much we students did. I grew up in the small south-central Idaho town
of Filer and I graduated from Filer High School. I had taken all of the appropriate
courses and had done well. However, looking back now I realize how ill-prepared I
was to hit the ground running in a much more rigorous environment and to be
successful in the “pre-med program,” which even in those days was highly
competitive and, as I recall, was occasionally described as “cut-throat.” The reason
that those of us coming out of mediocre high school preparation were successful was
the very nurturing atmosphere that was present at the College. If you came prepared
to work hard and determined to succeed then the Patricia Packards, Lyle Stanfords,
Robert Bratzs and so many others were there to go the extra mile to help you.

I don’t know if Pat Packard will recall from so many years ago but she was my
mentor on my senior honors project and paper. The topic was “A Karotypic Analysis
Of Patients with Marfan Syndrome.” I would go the State School and Hospital in
Nampa, which in those days had a large number of permanent residents who had a
variety of disabilities and health problems. They had several residents who had
Marfan’s Syndrome. The idea of analyzing the chromosomes or karyotype of
individuals was relatively new. Not long before it had been discovered that
individuals with Down’s Syndrome had trisomy 21, or three instead of the usual two
chromosome number 21.

Dr. Stanford, Packard and I discussed what a suitable subject for an honors project
and paper for me might be. With Dr Packard’s expert help I elected to take on the
Marfan’s project. I went to Nampa and drew the blood and brought the specimen
back here to the College where Dr. Packard helped me culture the white blood cells
and then isolate the chromosomes, photograph them and then undertake the
somewhat tedious task of matching up the pairs. Unfortunately, there was no
brilliant discovery and we found no unique chromosome abnormal pattern. What was
more important, Dr. Packard taught me a lot about the scientific method and how to
culture the leukocytes, extract the chromosomes, photograph the chromosomes and
then organize them into the 23 usual pairs. We painstakingly cut out the
chromosomes from the photos and then organized them.
Dr Packard may not remember but she spent lots of hours helping me do every step of this project. She did not just sit at a desk and advise me but was very involved in every aspect of the project right down to helping me pull together a coherent manuscript and complete the honors paper. She also accompanied me to Idaho State University to present the paper to the Idaho Academy of Science.

Dr Packard’s mentoring and encouragement meant a great deal to me. Through the years I was a student here she was a “mainstay” and one of the guiding lights of our science club, Philo Tech. She accompanied us “Philo Techers” on a number of great field trips. I am delighted that the Philo Tech Science Lounge will be named in her honor. Dr. Packard, thank you for being such a wonderful mentor and thank you for being here tonight.

Finally, I would like to turn attention to the science faculty. My good friend, Dr. Eric Yensen, was a student with me and following completion of his post-graduate education he has spent a career following in the footsteps of those wonderful C of I biology professors who proceeded him. Eric, thank you for being here and thank you for the tremendous contributions you have made to the College.

None of the rest of you were here those many years ago. In fact, I suspect that some of you may not yet have been born. But the real reason Mary and I have made the decision to support the Boone Hall restoration is because of you and your superb teaching and work. I am old (age challenged) and I look back with nostalgia and appreciation for what the College and my wonderful instructors did for me. However, more importantly, we are looking forward to the future of this fine school. You are the ones who have taken the torch and are advancing the science programs. The science program is bigger, better and more diverse than ever before – but I would wager is still woefully underfunded. Each of you has touched the lives of and inspired many students. Thank you so much for your contributions and for advancing the science tradition here at The College of Idaho. You are appreciated.

Well, I have said enough so thank you and good evening.