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Nielson Takes Over USD Program

Becomes 30th Head Football Coach Of USD

BY JEREMY HOECK

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Through his stoic and serious exterior, Bob Nielson made clear during his introductory press conference that he was thinking long-term.

Does that include championships for the University of South Dakota?

Yes. That's the goal, the new Coyote coach said Tuesday. "I think if you don't have bold goals, you'll never achieve bold goals," he said after his speech in Vermillion.

"I came here with the confidence that we can continue to move forward, and from my standpoint, the next step is to be a team that's competing for a championship."

Hired away from Western Illinois, where he was this season named Coach the Year in the Missouri Valley Football Conference,

the 56-year-old Nielson takes over a USD program that won 6 of 32 league games under former coach Joe Glenn.

While the Coyotes were certainly competitive within the Missouri Valley, Nielson's talk of winning league titles certainly caught some attention. Bold, yes, but within grasp, sure.

"That may sound bold, and I understand how hard that's going to be in this league, but that's going to be our belief and the goal we work toward," said Nielson, who will have an annual base salary of \$255,000.

Widely known for his ability to turn programs into playoff contenders, Nielson – who boasts 186 career wins in 23 seasons – talked at length during his 5-minute speech at the podium about the vision he sees at USD.

It was a vision he wanted to be part of, he said.

"Part of the decision to come here was based on the future," said Nielson, who guided Western Illinois to a 7-6 record this season and a berth in the FCS playoffs – the Leathernecks lost in the second round.

That was the kind of success USD envisioned when it began the search process three weeks ago after Glenn retired; someone who had a track record of winning, according to athletic director David Herbster.

It didn't take long for Nielson enter the radar, he said.

What followed were a series of back-and-forth conversations that ultimately led Nielson to agree to come to Vermillion. USD officials flew to Macomb on Monday to pick up Nielson and his wife, Terri.

"It's not often you hire a coach from within your conference, let

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'Ditch The Dream, Be A Doer'

USD Holds 40th Winter Commencement

BY SARAH WETZEL

For the Plain Talk

The University of South Dakota held its 40th annual winter commencement ceremony Saturday where more than 550 graduates were granted degrees.

Jeffrey Holcomb, President and CEO of Southeast Technical Institute in Sioux Falls and a 1982 USD graduate, was the keynote speaker.

"It's a great day to be a coyote," Holcomb opened, echoing the sentiments of all in attendance.

Holcomb shared his inspiration for his address which happened to be another graduation keynote speech by Shonda Rhimes entitled 'Ditch the dream, be a doer not a dreamer.'

While at first Holcomb said he was confused at the title of this speech, he said after reading it, it made more sense given his personal family history.

"In 1906 my great-grandfather and his bride had a dream and they were moving to a homestead," he said. "They went out there with the idea that they would build a general store next to the railroad and make their fortune and the were speculating on where that railroad would go."

According to Holcomb, his great-grandparents picked a spot that seemed ideal but was much less so when they got there.

For one thing there was no water and their first crop, turnips, failed.

"It was not necessarily the dream that they had," Holcomb said. "To add insult to injury the railroad went south of there along the river so they missed that too. So now what do we do? The dream has to change."

Holcomb's relatives moved onto the Pine Ridge reservation which had just opened up to settlers and established a ranch which has now been in operation for 100 years.

Holcomb shared with the graduates, the words of Albert Einstein.

"We cannot solve our problems by using the same thinking we used when we created them," Einstein said.

Holcomb encouraged the graduates to apply this thinking in their own lives.

"Don't fall in love with your dream," he said.

"Don't dream so much that you're still on the couch in your parents' basement waiting for you chance. Be a doer. Don't ever stop. What you think what your path may be isn't necessarily going to be what it is.

"The dream changes but it's not a bad thing," he said. "Your path isn't always going to be straight and you may have to ditch the dream. You may have to just alter the dream and look at it from a different perspective. What you think you will be doing now may not be what you end up doing but that's not a bad thing. You will find your way and you will find great success.

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GIVING THANKS



ELYSE BRIGHTMAN/VERMILLION PLAIN TALK

A University of South Dakota graduate wrote the message 'Thank you! Mom & Dad' on her graduation cap at the 2015 winter commencement Saturday morning in the DakotaDome.

District 17 Legislators Meet With School Officials

BY SARAH WETZEL

For The Plain Talk

Senator Arthur Rusch and Representative Ray Ring met with members of the Vermillion School District Board Thursday to discuss various issues facing the district.

Rusch said he hopes the public feels they can communicate with him personally on issues they feel strongly about.

"I hope the community gets out of this meeting that the legislators really try to do their best," he said. "It's a lot of stuff that comes up in a nine week period in Pierre. Criminal justice, I think I know something about that, but education funding, I don't know as much about that. Voters or people who have some sort of expertise about areas that are willing to talk to us about, that's really beneficial to me."

Major topics focused on throughout the discussion Thursday with the Vermillion school district included state aid funding and teacher to student ratios.

"I learn a lot about this," Rusch said afterwards. "I'm not an expert on school funding so the greatest thing is probably that I learn a lot about the impact out there. Then of course the schools are important. I have kids who



SARAH WETZEL/FOR THE PLAIN TALK

The Vermillion School board held a special meeting last week to visit with area legislators about the needs of the school district. The meeting, held at Red, created a good dialog between all of the participants.

went through so Vermillion schools are important to me and I want to try to do something for them. I need to make further effort to get to other schools in my district but that's a lot harder to do than here in Vermillion."

One of the challenges recognized by both the legislators and the board members was the fact that all the school

districts operate under the same budget though they carry different needs.

"I guess my goal is to get the funding that they need and clearly that's going to involve some proposals that are going to impact schools," Rusch said. "I don't want to hurt any schools too

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