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USD must respond

By Travis Gulbrandson
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University of South Dakota president Jim Abbott delivered his annual State of the University Address Wednesday, Sept. 19 at Aalfs Auditorium in Vermillion.

(Photo by David Lias)

The face of higher education is changing, with increasing fees, decreased state funding and more students taking more courses online.

University of South Dakota's president James Abbott said these are challenges that must be faced.

"The question that needs to be answered is how USD responds long-term if the current education model changes radically," he said. "I think every university needs to have an all-campus conversation on the future of higher education, and how you react to it, and you change it or not change it."

He said everyone at USD needs to know how "we can be assured that we can do what we need to do, and that we can continue to be the force ... to lead and educate our students."

Abbott made these statements during his annual State of the University Address, which took place Wednesday afternoon in Aalfs Auditorium on the USD campus.

Continuing trends find institutions of

higher education losing government funding, which in turn sees an increase in fees for students.

The average college students post-graduation will have a credit card debt of \$24,000, Abbott said.

For this reason, taking courses online is attractive to many students, as it is less expensive. However, it may have unforeseen effects on the systems of universities everywhere.

"Graduate education is subsidized by undergraduate education, upper-division courses are basically subsidized by lower-division," Abbott said. "So, what happens to the business model? What happens to our revenue? What happens to the way we operate if or when lower-division courses become ubiquitous and virtually free?"

Abbott said he is "a little haunted" by the story of the Pony Express, which found itself bankrupt in a short space of time after the invention of the telegraph rendered it obsolete.

"I don't know that there's something like an intercontinental telegraph that's going to take over, but I really do wonder how it is that we are going to respond if some of these things come to pass," he said.

Abbott cited a recent survey which claimed that by the year 2020, 60 percent of college students will be taking 60 percent of their courses online.

He said that while these figures don't seem realistic to him, "It's pretty clear what that would do to our normal situation."

One way to protect the university is to increase the number of on-campus graduate and professional program students, Abbott said.

"I think this is going to be ... very difficult to convince the next two or three generations of students to say, 'I'm going to go in-residence for a master's in chemistry'"

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USD speaker: 'Are the pre-Roe vs. Wade days here?'

By David Lias
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American society's acceptance of abortion has waxed and waned over the decades, from somewhat blind acceptance of the practice in the 19th century, to a growing crackdown on both women and abortion practitioners early in the 20th century.

That's according to Leslie J. Reagan, Ph.D., who presented the 2012 Herbert S. Schell Lecture on the University of South Dakota campus Thursday night.

Before a packed audience in the Al Neuharth Media Center, Reagan noted public sentiment began growing more tolerant toward the practice in the late 1960s, culminating in the U.S. Supreme Court's Roe vs. Wade decision that legalized abortion.



Leslie J. Reagan, Ph.D., discussed the history and societal evolution of abortion during the University of South Dakota's 2012 Herbert S. Schell Lecture Thursday, Sept. 20, in Vermillion.

(Photo by David Lias)

In recent years, she said, societal trends and the actions of federal and state government officials appear to reflect, once again, resistance to abortion even though it has been deemed a legal medical practice in the United States.

"The law is more than the law alone. The rest of the society (outside of government) makes the law. It enforces it or ignores it, or sometimes may even make a legal behavior a crime by making it impossible to practice that legal behavior," she said.

She said it may be argued that the United States is beginning to resemble its old self before abortion was deemed legal – an era in which "in some places it was legal, and in some places it was illegal." Today, she noted, the procedure, while legal, is more readily

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Clay County celebrates 100th, 150th anniversaries

By Travis Gulbrandson
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Clay County celebrated two milestone anniversaries last week.

On Friday, Sept. 21, area residents gathered for a celebration to designate the 100th anniversary of the Clay County Courthouse, and the 150th anniversary of the county itself.

A plaque commemorating both dates was dedicated by Clay County Commission Chairman Leo Powell, which was followed by comments regarding local history by Jim Wilson and Judge Arthur Rusch.

"We're glad that we have this courthouse, and I would like to compliment the present county commission and all their predecessors for doing such a wonderful job of preserving it and keeping it the way it should be," said Wilson, who represented the Clay County Historical Preservation Committee.

Rusch agreed, adding that the building is "one of the nicest little courthouses in the state."

"It's also been well-maintained by the county commissioners," he said. "In contrast, Yankton's courthouse was built in the same era, in 1905, but was not as well-built originally and not well-maintained by the county. It's been torn down now."

The courthouse located in Elk Point that was built in 1898 met a similar fate, he said.

The building was designed by Omaha architect Lloyd Willis, and the cornerstone was laid in June 1912.

Construction was completed in April 1913, Rusch said.

"The date (of the presentation) was picked to celebrate the birthday of the courthouse kind of midway while it was still under construction," he said.

The total cost of the project was



A crowd gathered outside the Clay County Courthouse last Friday to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the building, and the 150th anniversary of the county itself.

(Photo by David Lias)

approximately \$95,000, an amount Rusch said would never be viable today with the marble, mosaic tile, light fixtures, ornate railings and woodwork featured in the completed building.

"Obviously, it would be a pretty expensive proposition," he said.

During the ceremony, Wilson unveiled

the courthouses throughout South Dakota.

He started that project 25 years ago and hopes to publish a book about it next year, he said.

"This building is of particular interest to me," he said.

Part of that interest stems from the fact

that the very first court session was held in the Dakota Territory was held in Vermillion on Aug. 6, 1861, Rusch said.

While he added that he is unsure where the hearing was held, he thinks it might have been in a store on Broadway Street.

The first building officially designated as a courthouse was located above Jensen's Drug Store on Broadway.

"They rented a hall, and in that hall they could have public meetings and trials," Rusch said.

The second courthouse was built on what is now Court Street, in the location of the current post office, he said.

"That courthouse is unique as far as any other courthouse I've been able to find records of anywhere because as far as I know, that's the first courthouse – or the only courthouse – where a university was started (inside)," Rusch said. "Old Main was under construction, so the first classes couldn't be held there."

As a result, classes for the University of Dakota – as USD was then called – were

held in the courthouse.

The current facility was added to the National Registry of Historic Places in 1983.

Rusch said that over the course of his research, he discovered a number of humorous stories involving the building, including one about a group of prisoners who made nightly escapes from the county jail to raid an area restaurant of food.

Another featured a lawyer who was disbarred because it was discovered he had removed one of the glass blocks in the jail window so he could encourage prisoners to request that he represent them in court.

"Now all kinds of advertising is permissible, so I don't know if he would have been disbarred for that or not," Rusch said.

Following the dedication ceremony was a presentation on historic barns in Clay County by Jim Stone.



Judge Arthur Rusch gives a presentation on the history of the Clay County Courthouse as Clay County Commission Chairman Leo Powell listens.

(Photo by David Lias)

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