

Article Last Updated: 9/29/2005 12:58 AM

Hinckley Institute: 40 candles, 4,000 partyers

By **Shinika A. Sykes**
The Salt Lake Tribune
Salt Lake Tribune

When the Hinckley Institute of Politics began operations in 1965, its office was so small the part-time secretary sat across the hallway at a desk in the political science department.

With little money, a director and two interns, the institute focused on its core directive: to promote political and civic involvement and engage university students in the political process.

"It was the best time to work for the institute," said Bae Gardner, the former part-timer who retired 25 years later as the institute's associate director. "We were doing it a day at a time . . . and found we were doing it well."

Forty years and four directors later, the nonpartisan institute has a \$9 million-plus endowment and has placed 4,000 student interns in local, national and international government offices.

To commemorate its 40 years at the University of Utah, the institute is inviting the public to an anniversary celebration Friday at the Rice-Eccles Stadium Tower on campus.

Several prominent speakers are part of the celebration, among them Brent Scowcroft, national security adviser under President Ford and the first President Bush, and Werner Fornos, an international authority on global security and terrorism.

Due to the support of Regence BlueCross and BlueShield, there is no charge for Friday's gala dinner - although attendees are urged to support the renovation of the Hinckley Caucus Room, director Kirk Jowers said.

"The Hinckley Institute of Politics means so much to so many people, the celebration is a way for all 4,000 interns and public officials to come together and think about where we have been and where we are going," Jowers said. "It's also recognition and appreciation for the incredible philanthropy the Hinckley family has shown."

Robert H. Hinckley, founder of Hinckley Dodge, co-founder of the ABC networks and a high-ranking member of the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, started the institute for the sole purpose of "teaching young college students how important democratic politics are - and training them to go into politics," said J.D. Williams, U. professor emeritus and the institute's first director.

The institute's creation has a noteworthy twist, Williams added.

In January 1960, a U. student-body committee invited then-Sen. John Kennedy of Massachusetts to speak on campus. At that time, the university prohibited politicians on campus. The state had to pass a resolution, specifically allowing the Democratic presidential candidate to come and speak, Williams said.

"Kennedy's speech was absolutely mind-blowing. By the time he ended with Robert Frost's 'I have miles to go before I sleep . . .' we all started to bawl," Williams said.

That set the stage for Hinckley and a friend to come up with the original \$250,000 grant for the institute, Williams said. "You never saw a Board of Regents jump through the hoops faster than the [then] U. Board of Regents did to create an institute of politics."

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Featured speakers for the 40th anniversary gala

Where: Rice-Eccles Stadium Tower

When: Friday, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Speaker: Brent Scowcroft, native Utahn and former national security adviser under Presidents Ford and George H.W. Bush

Reservation: Required (581-8501), semi-formal dress

The directors

J.D. Williams, 1965-1975

R.J. Snow, 1975-1985

Ted Wilson, 1985-2003

Kirk Jowers, 2005 to present

A few of the better-known grads

Karl Rove, director of policy to President Bush

Rob Bishop, U.S. representative for Utah

Enid Green, former U.S. representative for Utah

Jim Bradley, Democrat, Salt Lake County Council

Randy Horiuchi, Democrat, Salt Lake County Council

Jim Jardine, State Board of Regents