

Conferences abound at BSU

Boise State continues to host numerous academic and cultural conferences. The annual Martin Luther King Jr./Idaho Human Rights Celebration, scheduled for Jan. 19-24, 2004, will open the spring semester's slate of conferences and cultural programs.

The theme of the 2004 MLK conference will be "Different and the Same: Today, Tomorrow, Forever." A keynote speaker has yet to be selected.

Conferences recently held at or sponsored by Boise State included:

- "Freedom & Secrecy: Trading Liberty for Security," sponsored by the Frank Church Institute, Andrus Center and *The Idaho Statesman*. Keynote speakers included *Washington Post* columnist David Broder, former U.S. Vice President Walter Mondale (Page 8) and former U.S. Sen. Slade Gorton.

- The 19th meeting of the American Conference for Irish Studies/West, presented by the Office of the Consul General of Ireland and Boise State.

- The 15th annual STD/AIDS Conference, "Integrating Efforts: Prevention, Care and Education," presented by the Idaho Department of Education and Idaho Health and Welfare STD/AIDS program.

- The Idaho Archaeological Society's 30th annual conference, sponsored by Boise State and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office.

Professor OF THE Year

**GARZA IS 'SOUL FOOD'
FOR THOSE SHE TEACHES**

BY JANELLE BROWN

It's impossible to sit in Alicia Garza's classroom and not feel energized. As students settle into their chairs in her Introduction to Hispanic Literature class, Garza moves around the room, chatting easily in Spanish and flashing a warm smile.

"She's a wonderful teacher. She's vibrant and she can be very funny," says student Melissa King, as she pulls out the rough draft of an essay she's working on. Adds student Holli Storey, "She has a lot of energy."

Moments later, Garza tells students to move into pairs to edit essays. One student literally catapults over a desk to claim the prized spot of working with Garza. "I need all the help I can get," he says with a sheepish grin.

A professor of Spanish at Boise State since 1996, Garza routinely receives accolades for the excellence of her teaching. Her expertise in Latin American and Chicano culture and literature has enabled her to develop new courses in the department of modern languages and literatures.

"Teaching is highly satisfying for me," says Garza, who grew up speaking Spanish at home and first learned English from watching TV. "It's a privilege to teach."

For her outstanding teaching, Garza has been named the Carnegie Foundation's Idaho Professor of the Year for 2003. She'll join winning professors from other states in mid-November for an official ceremony and reception on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

"I'm speechless. I can't believe it. This is the highlight of my career," says Garza.

The public is invited to a reception for Garza at 5-7 p.m. on Dec. 2 in the Lookout Room of the Student Union Building. Boise State President Bob Kustra and other dignitaries will officially present Garza with the teaching award.

Garza may have been surprised at her selection, but those who know her say she is richly deserving of the award. "She shows genuine respect and consideration for all students, whatever their linguistic capacity, whatever their opinion," wrote Teresa Boucher, chair of the department of modern languages and literatures in a letter supporting Garza's nomination.

Garza has the ability to deal with sensitive issues such as gender, race and unequal social status that are part of her course literature in a way that never belittles students, according to a letter from former student Iris Rocha. "Her mastery of the subject matter and constant enthusiasm has [encouraged] many students to get involved in the community," Rocha wrote.

The daughter of migrant farmworkers whose formal education ended at grade school, Garza is a powerful role model, say students and colleagues. "For Chicanos and Chicanas, she is soul food because she shares her experiences and they are similar to those of her students," wrote one student in a course evaluation.

Garza earned a Ph.D. in Hispanic literature from the University of Arizona. She credits her family with instilling in her the importance of an education and encouraging her dreams. She received the 2002 Distinguished Teaching Award from the College of Arts and Sciences and the 1998 Outstanding Faculty Award from the Associated Students of Boise State.

Garza is the eighth Boise State professor overall to win the prestigious Professor of the Year award. Past recipients include Todd Shallat, history; John Freemuth, political science; Russell Centanni, biology; Pam Gehrke, nursing; Stephanie Witt, political science; Greg Raymond, political science; and Tom Trusky, English, who won three times.



ALICIA GARZA