

# HELPING IDA



Boise State's College of Business and Economics is working with hundreds of local businesses and organizations, including the Ada County Paramedics, to give them a boost in a difficult economic climate. J.R. McGee (left), Jason Creamer, Darby Weston, Brandi Creamer, Troy Hagen, Kallie Henderson and Jenna Hines are among those at Ada County Paramedics who are working with marketing professor Gary McCain and a team of students that includes Nelli Garibyan and Chelsea Briggs.

## By Sherry Squires and Kathleen Tuck

Boise State University was born during the Depression and weaned on the challenges of the World War II era, when low enrollment almost forced its closure. Having faced these challenges and emerged stronger, Boise State is uniquely situated to not only weather the current economic crisis, but also provide the community support that only a rising metropolitan research university can offer.



From page 3: Art metals students Penny Harrison, Erin Shine and Ellen Crosby created bowls for a local fundraiser benefiting the Idaho Foodbank.

# HO WEATHER THE STORM

Throughout its history, Boise State has been an integral part of the Treasure Valley and beyond. In fact, Boise State's influence is felt across Idaho through the contributions of its students, faculty and alumni. From developing new technology that assists business and industry to staffing hospitals and medical clinics, educating a rising generation and offering quality arts and entertainment, Boise State continues to play a major role in the economic vitality of the Gem State.

Just days after Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter presented his bleak fiscal forecast to Idaho lawmakers in January, Boise State President Bob Kustra stood before faculty and staff to reiterate that, despite budget cuts, Boise State is committed to its mission of educating students and continuing to forge vital partnerships with the community.

Those partnerships help fuel economic development and the recovery process.

Rising to the challenge, the College of Business and Economics (COBE) organized the Business Research and Economic Development Center, a one-stop-shop for the local business community to tap into the expertise of Boise State faculty members and other specialists. Thus far, COBE has engaged with nearly 500 local businesses and organizations grappling with how to adjust compensation for employees; find new ways to market; cut waste; set prices; tap into new sources of revenue; and a host of other issues.

The Ada County Paramedics is one of the entities that sought advice. While the agency receives about 27 percent of its budget from public funds, the rest comes

from user fees and membership programs. Those suffer during difficult economic times.

"Not surprisingly, the economy has had an impact on health care across the board and our agency is simply part of that," says Ada County Paramedics director Troy Hagen. Many have lost jobs and health insurance and thus are not seeking medical care even if they need it. His agency is looking to publicize its membership program in hopes of curbing that trend. "We're seeking third-party input into our marketing strategies for a fresh perspective from young budding professionals for a variety of different reasons. Some of it is for validation of our current processes and also to see if there's something we can be doing better."

The college is addressing the challenges for local businesses and organizations in innovative ways. Faculty and their students took on class projects, the TECenter is helping with high-tech entrepreneurial ventures, recent MBA graduates are offering free consulting, and connections have been forged with small business and manufacturing experts.

"The resources available through Boise State, and particularly the COBE Business Research and Economic Development Center, are a tremendous asset to the Treasure Valley region," says Patrick Shannon, COBE dean. "These are difficult economic times, but the center's faculty and professional staff are dedicated to helping local businesses cope and be very well positioned when the economy does turn around."

A related outreach effort is under way

at TechHelp, a statewide partnership headquartered at Boise State that provides technical and business assistance to Idaho manufacturers, thus helping them become more competitive in a tight market. In the 12-month period ending in April 2009, TechHelp services helped Idaho businesses increase or retain sales of \$35.5 million, save \$16 million in costs, and create or retain 849 jobs. Idaho's Small Business Development Center, also headquartered at Boise State, reports similar success, with 1,175 jobs created or saved in 2008, an increase of \$107 million in sales for their clients, and, in turn, \$7 million in additional state and federal tax revenues.

To help people qualify for those newly created jobs, the Division of Extended Studies and the College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs are making bachelor's degrees more accessible to adult learners who already have some college education and now find themselves in need of a degree. The AfterWork degree-completion program and Bachelor of General Studies degree address the often-unique issues faced by many adult learners.

Still other university outreach efforts range from Boise State's involvement with the Idaho Software Employers Alliance's efforts to promote computer science opportunities to the Department of Art's Empty Bowls event, where bowls are crafted by art metals students and offered for purchase at a local restaurant to benefit the Idaho Foodbank.

More on Boise State's community outreach efforts can be found at [boisestate.edu/finad/budgetimpact/](http://boisestate.edu/finad/budgetimpact/).