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**By Sherry Squires**

It was 17 degrees that night. Brett Berning and a few college friends were participating in a campout on the Quad to draw attention to homelessness. The concrete was cold and hard but the fellowship was warm. He probably would have counted it worth the effort, even without what happened next.

“A few of us were huddled together on the Quad that night and Greg Mortenson heard about our event and he just walked down and shared some stories with us about why he does what he does,” Berning says. “I found myself sitting beside a world-renowned humanitarian.”

Berning had served on the organizing committee for Boise State’s First Year Read program. Earlier that day he had introduced Mortenson, the author of this year’s book, “Three Cups of Tea,” to a crowd of 2,500 people.

# LIVE AND LEARN

**ABOUT 2,300 BOISE STATE STUDENTS** live on campus in a variety of settings, including traditional residence halls, apartments and residential colleges that serve as both living and learning communities.

It was a special moment, one that couldn't have been orchestrated. But putting Boise State's 2,300 student residents in the right places at the right times, and stretching their experiences to encompass all that a vibrant campus has to offer, is the focus these days for University Housing.

Living on campus can be life changing, and the implications can be lifelong. Students who live on campus attend more campus events, make more meaningful connections to their studies and are more likely to succeed.

"There is definitely a connection between living on campus and learning," says Jeff Hale. Charged with

directing University Housing efforts, Hale focuses largely on creating a traditional campus experience for the growing number of students who live on campus.

University Housing has created a network of living and learning communities, some of which pair students and faculty members as neighbors. They are built around common interests, areas of study and even cultural exchange.

"Living on campus was the best decision I made for my college career, hands down," Berning says.

"By proximity we are welcomed into so many positive experiences. The opportunities are at your doorstep."

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## LIGHTENING THE LOAD

In addition to providing students with valuable college experiences, living on campus also can provide much-needed financial resources.

University Housing compensates about 70 students each year who serve as resident advisers, program assistants and other student employees, with room and board, and in some cases a stipend.

In addition, some scholarships cover housing costs for recipients. They include National Science Foundation (NSF) scholarships for engineering and computer science students who meet academic and financial-need requirements. A number of Boise State's NSF scholars live in the Engineering Residential College. Honors College students who are recipients of the Thelma and Dean Brown Scholarship also have housing costs paid and are required to live in Driscoll Hall.

Students who live on campus often make themselves more viable for other scholarships because of their active participation and leadership in campus activities. They include senior Brett Berning, who received a \$1,000 AmeriCorps "Students in Service" scholarship for the 300 hours he devoted to organizing an alternative spring break trip for Boise State students.

"Because of the help, I was able to continue this semester," Berning says. "I'm not sure what I would have done without it."

Berning exemplifies the full college experience. His four years on campus include involvement with more than 40 student groups or activities, everything from helping organize alternative spring break trips to a run at student body president, from being a journalist for the student newspaper to coaching youth basketball. He hopes to cap it off with a study abroad experience before graduating next December with a social science degree.

In the meantime, he lives and serves as the program assistant in the Global Village Community, Boise State's newest living and learning adventure. It is home to 24 students, half are international and half are American. Berning's three roommates hail from Malaysia, South Korea and New York. Other students in the hall are from France, Spain, Germany, Japan, Norway, Iceland, Taiwan and Mexico. For a Boise kid, it's been an international immersion without leaving home.

"We share food, stories and so much more," he says. "You learn to see yourself in a whole new way, your values, your culture."

The Residential College program also has been a success. The five communities each are facilitated by a faculty in residence and bring students together in business and economics, arts and humanities, engineering, health professions and civic engagement. They are growing into true partnerships between academics and student affairs, according to Melissa Wintrow, who works alongside Hale to enhance campus living. Students share more than rooms; they take classes together, interact regularly with faculty, go on field trips and give of their time.



ANNIE DALTON HAS BEEN A CAMPUS RESIDENT for five years, where she has learned from her experiences and shared her ideas for further engaging students.

"Visiting with faculty outside of class really changes your stereotypical expectation of what a professor is supposed to look like and act like," Berning says. "It's priceless because we all connect at a human level."

Hale and Wintrow take a lot of their cues from students like Berning and senior Annie Dalton, who has lived in campus housing for five years and now works as a student assistant there.

Dalton grew up in Greenleaf, Idaho, a small rural town west of Caldwell, and chose to live on campus to avoid a long commute and parking issues. She enjoyed the more tangible advantages to living on campus, like waking up late and still making it to class. But the experience also has shaped her in unexpected ways. It has helped her secure jobs, and she can't help smiling when she talks about raft trips and holiday gatherings with fellow students.

She also has been able to help shape new programs, such as the First Year Focus for freshmen. Twenty-four

students live and take three core classes together, and the program has proven to be a hit with students.

"I've loved living on campus ever since I arrived," Dalton says. "The biggest thing I've gained is the people I've met and the relationships I've built, not just with students, but professional staff and faculty who are my mentors."

Regardless of their varying emphases, all of Boise State's living and learning options offer students common advantages. They serve as 24/7 classrooms, where students learn to resolve conflict and spread their wings in an environment specifically designed to nurture them academically and socially.

"We have a resident adviser on every floor," Wintrow says. "You don't get that kind of support anywhere else. Living on campus is not a rite of passage at Boise State; it's a choice our students make. And we want it to be a very rewarding choice."

Learn more at [housing.boisestate.edu](http://housing.boisestate.edu).



BRETT BERNING has roommates from throughout the country and world as a member of the Global Village Community, Boise State's international residence hall.

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