

Metropolitan Amenities

Meet some of the many students taking advantage of Boise State's urban location



JOHN KELLY PHOTO

Nelson

HER GOAL: LAUNCH NEW CAREER AT 70

By Kathleen Mortensen

Like many of her classmates, Elanta Nelson is working part time, squeezing in classes between shifts as a substitute teacher for the Boise School District. By

next summer she hopes to have her master's degree in education.

Unlike the majority of her classmates, Nelson is not looking for real-world experience before entering the workaday world. Instead, the 70-year-old former teacher, who has lived and traveled around the globe, wants to

fulfill a lifelong dream to finally receive her graduate degree, which she hopes she might be able to use one day in a service organization such as the Peace Corps.

Nelson represents a new genre for many universities — older students who are actively seeking the degrees they've postponed for a variety of reasons into their golden years.

After graduating from Nampa High School in the late 1940s, Nelson enrolled at the University of Idaho, where she worked two jobs to pay her way — as an art model (modestly clothed in a bathing suit) and in the bookstore for 50 cents per hour. Graduating in 1953 as a married woman, she then joined her husband in New York, Tokyo and Hawaii, where she raised her family. Despite her lack of a formal

teaching credential, she taught at an American school in Japan and also tutored English as a second language.

Boise State's metropolitan university mission is a boon for seniors like Nelson. Not only do they receive a hefty discount on class fees, Nelson says she also feels more accepted in the mix of non-traditional students.

"The attitude in class is very nice," she says. "No one classifies you as an older person. The quality of people in classes is really excellent."

And because so many of her classmates are also taking courses in addition to holding full- or part-time jobs, professors tend to be understanding of the inevitable scheduling conflicts.

"They take into account that you do have other things to do," she says. "I really appreciate that." □

GED PROGRAM GIVES HER NEW LEASE ON LIFE

By Bob Evancho

Last July, Boise native Kimberly Heffner hit rock bottom. She had separated from her husband, who left the 34-year-old Boise native and their infant daughter several house payments in arrears. A high school dropout, Heffner's only work experience had been a series of dead-end jobs.

With few marketable skills and scant income, she applied for welfare. "I was in a destitute situation," Heffner says. "I had worked since I was 14, but they were mostly low-wage, no-advancement jobs. I was suddenly faced with fighting for

my survival and the survival of my child. I never wanted to go on welfare, but I had no choice."

Then Boise State entered her life in the form of adult basic education coordinator Jac Webb. Part of Webb's job with Boise State's Selland College of Applied

Technology is to assess the skill levels and educational goals of people like Heffner for possible placement in Working Solutions, a welfare-to-work program.

With Webb's assistance, Heffner went on to earn her GED a few months later.



CHUCK SCHERER PHOTO

Heffner

body," she says. "Living on welfare is not the way to go. I want my daughter to see what a woman can do independently. I want her to know her mommy is making our life better."

Heffner says Boise State deserves

Now she is a freshman at Boise State, working for the adult basic education program that helped her, majoring in criminal justice administration and aspiring to go on to law school.

"I had always wanted to do something and be some-

much of the credit for helping her to turn her life around. "With people like Jac and places like Adult Basic Education and the Women's Center, you know you're not alone," she says. "It's very empowering to know you're not alone." □

IMMIGRANT FINDS BALANCE AT BOISE STATE

By Patricia Pyke

Mayra Calderon balances between two worlds.

In the world of her heritage, she hoed beans and harvested potatoes with her family and other farmworkers in fields around Burley. In the world of her future, she envisions herself as a businesswoman for a multinational company, providing a cultural bridge between the United States and Mexico.

For Calderon, a junior majoring in international business and minoring in Spanish and Mexican American studies, Boise State is the fulcrum providing her balance point.

"When I was looking to go to school, Boise State was the only one that offered international business here in Idaho," she says.



CHUCK SCHEER PHOTO

Calderon

Another draw to Boise State was CAMP (College Assistance Migrant Program), which provided a scholarship along with social and academic support to help her make the transition from struggling immigrant to urban college student.

Calderon's family immigrated to the Burley area 10 years ago from the Mexican state of Michoacan in search

of educational opportunities and a better life for their children.

"My dad said 'I didn't have the opportunity, I had to drop out of school when I was in third grade and help my parents. We're trying to give you a chance,'" says Calderon about her family's move to the United States.

Calderon, the oldest of four children, has made the

most of her opportunities and helped others along the way. Her extensive community service earned her the first annual Meredyth Burns/Martin Luther King Jr. scholarship, awarded this January.

In addition to carrying a full course load, Calderon works full time as a teller at First Security Bank, serves as president of Boise State's Latino student club (Organización de Estudiantes Latino-Americanos), participates in numerous activities at the Boise State Multi-Cultural Center, and is married to Ricardo Calderon, a junior majoring in civil engineering at Boise State.

Calderon says she works hard because she wants to live up to her family's expectations. "My dream is to succeed, make my parents proud and to let my parents know that their sacrifices were worth it," she says. □

NEW STUDENT FINDS HONORS COLLEGE TOPS

By Janelle Brown

When Nathan Creamer enrolled at Boise State University last fall, he didn't know a soul within a 500-mile radius. He'd never lived away from home before and high school graduation was only a few months behind him.

Seven months later, the 19-year-old from Richfield, Utah, has settled comfortably into his dorm room in Driscoll Hall and is best friends with a Boise State student from Taiwan.

He volunteers each week at the Boise Rescue Mission, attends many cultural and sports events on and off campus, and rates his Honors College classes as top-notch.

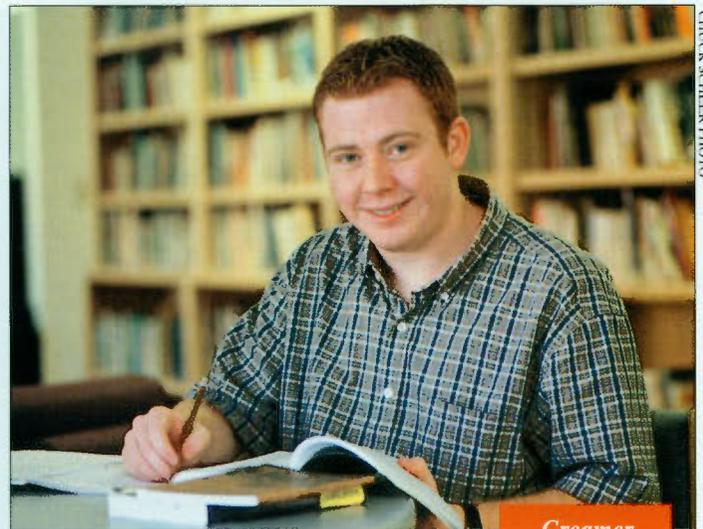
Ask him about his transi-

tion to university life, and Creamer smiles. "It's been really easy to meet people here. This is a very friendly campus," he says.

Creamer, a high school academic standout, received a prestigious Brown Scholarship to attend Boise State. He was also offered scholarships at a number of other universities, but says he chose Boise State after visiting the campus and being impressed with what was here.

"It's a good size, but it's not overwhelming. The Honors College is great. And I like the diversity—people bring many different real-world experiences into the classroom," Creamer says.

Creamer also likes the fact the university and the city are so connected. He walks from his dorm room to his volunteer shift at the Boise Rescue Mission, to downtown restaurants, to the state



CHUCK SCHEER PHOTO

Creamer

Capitol and to Idaho Steelheads hockey games. "The city is the university. Almost everything I want to do is 10 minutes or less away," Creamer says.

A political science major, Creamer says he's interested in serving internships in the state Legislature or in Washington, D.C., and per-

haps spending a semester in Ireland with the Study Abroad program before he graduates. Then, he may enroll in law school.

"My goal is to make a difference in the world," he says. □

MOM AND CHILD BENEFIT FROM KIDS' CENTER

By Kathleen Mortensen

For Sabrina Call, college was never a given. After graduating from Borah High School in 1981, she enrolled at Boise State along with many of her classmates. But it didn't take her long to realize that college wasn't her cup of tea, at least not yet. So she opted to move to California and take a job in the brewing industry. Following a 10-year stint, she moved to Hawaii, where she spent a couple of years living in a tent.

Eventually she decided she was ready for the formal education she had shunned as a young adult. But by then, she was a working mom with a whole array of challenges to add to the mix of classes, lectures and term papers.

In short, her time is never wholly her own. Her first priority is always her 5-year-old daughter Delaney.

"It's very difficult to juggle your priorities when you're a mom and student and you're working," says the 37-year-old radiologic sciences major, who worked through her junior year to help offset costs. "You want to be a good student to improve yourself, but your focus has to be on your kids."

For Call, that means scheduling classes and study time for when Delaney is at Boise State's Children's Center, or hitting the books



JOHN KELLY PHOTO

Call

after she goes to bed at night. This schedule frees up time to devote to her daughter.

The Children's Center is just one way the university serves students with children, but Call says that for her, it's a lifesaver.

The center is also set up on a three-tier rate schedule to ensure that the care is affordable, and it's nationally accredited with a low stu-

dent-teacher ratio and teachers who have four-year degrees.

"A lot of other care situations don't take into account the stress levels of parents through the semester," she says. "The kids get cranky a couple of

weeks before finals, because the parents are probably cranky at home. They help the kids work through that."

Call also says she appreciates Boise State's urban location, with nearby opportunities for practicums and internships. "It's wonderful that the community works so well with the school here," she says. "And that the job market is so good." □

HE'S A PH.D. PIONEER IN GEOPHYSICS

By Janelle Brown

Marc Buursink may be the only Ph.D. student enrolled at Boise State University, but he doesn't feel lonely. Or isolated.

Instead, the 29-year-old from McLean, Va., says he likes being the first candidate in the university's new doctoral program in geophysics. And he's finding plenty of opportunities to interact with both professors and other students.

"I looked at other Ph.D. programs, but I decided to come here partly because the program was new," says Buursink. "You have the opportunity for more flexibility, to set precedents and do things right."

Boise State's Ph.D. program in geophysics was



CHUCK SCHEER PHOTO

Buursink

approved by the State Board of Education in 1999 and began in fall 2000. It's the first Ph.D. offered at the university; an Ed.D. program in

curriculum and instruction was established in 1994.

The geophysics program is expected to grow to five Ph.D. students by fall 2002, according to Jack Pelton, graduate program coordinator and director of the Center for Geophysical Investigation of the Shallow Subsurface.

Buursink works alongside CGISS scientists, attends graduate classes and also pursues research for his dissertation at the Boise Hydrogeophysical Research

Site along the Boise River.

His office is across the hall from CGISS headquarters in the Math/Geosciences Building; the location and informal atmosphere make it easy for Buursink to drop by and talk to researchers or connect with other graduate students.

Buursink sees that easy accessibility as a big plus. He also likes the fact that the university has many nontraditional students because they bring different perspectives.

Buursink has found plenty to do both on and off campus, including joining the Idaho Mountain Search and Rescue Unit and serving as secretary/treasurer of student chapters of two national geophysics organizations.

"It's fairly easy to get involved here," says Buursink. "So far, it's worked out very well." □

TECH PROGRAM GIVES STUDENT NEW DIRECTION

By Justin Endow

When Isaac Meikle first arrived at Boise State as an electrical engineering student in 1997, he was not even aware that the university had two-year vocational programs outside of diesel mechanics or office occupations.

But in his third semester, Meikle was thumbing through the university catalog when he stumbled across the description for the computer network support program, a two-year technology degree offered through the Seland College of Applied Technology. The program teaches students how to design, build and maintain computer network systems.

"I wanted to head a different direction," says Meikle, 22, a 1997 graduate of Skyline High School in Idaho

Falls and a former ASBSU senator. "The program cuts away all the extra classes. In a four-year program, you can float for a while, figure out what you want to do. I knew this would be the right direction for me; I would get to focus immediately on what I was interested in."

Meikle found not only that the program focuses on specific content, but that it also focuses on instruction.

"The professors have a zest for teaching," Meikle says, "and the students connect more deeply with their instructors because they often have the same ones throughout their programs. I



Meikle

CHUCK SCHERER PHOTO

The students have similar opportunities right in the classroom, cultivated in part by Meikle's efforts. He started a computer network support student organization that works with corporations to bring in computers and other equipment that will supplement the

program.

"The tech companies provide the materials, and when the students graduate, the companies can hire experienced technicians," he says. "I wanted to help build our relationship with the tech companies in the area, because ultimately it will benefit high tech in the valley, but it also will benefit the students and Boise State." □

have had only three different teachers in two years."

The most valuable advantage to the computer network support program, however, has been the opportunity for constant hands-on learning. Meikle is currently interning with the Idaho State Tax Commission, aiding its network support team in rolling out Microsoft Windows 2000 and upgrading the existing network.

HER HEART LED HARRISON BACK TO CLASSROOM

By Judy Grigg Hansen

Amy Harrison, 26, traded a six-figure salary as a financial analyst for school books, term papers and a dream to be a science teacher. The second-career student is working toward an M.A. in education, curriculum and instruction at Boise State.

"I'm looking at a huge pay cut, but my heart wasn't in finance," Harrison says. "My heart is in science. I was working 12 hours a day and saying, 'Did I do anything worthwhile?'"

Harrison graduated in 1996 with a bachelor's degree in zoology and a minor in chemistry from Albertson College of Idaho. She was quickly promoted after landing the financial analyst job,



Harrison

JOHN KEITY PHOTO

pressed with the staff, and I love the master's program. It is great because we are in the classroom from the very first semester. I will be at Eagle Middle School with the same teacher for the whole two years."

Harrison likes the camaraderie of the students and the instructors in the program.

"It's a comfortable environment," she says. "We trade e-mail and two of the other students have internships at the same school, so we talk a lot. Also, the professors are friendly," she says.

Harrison plans to teach junior high or high school science after graduation. "It is a job where I can make a difference, maybe small, but I will actually be doing something good for someone else," she says. □

but she quit in March of last year with nothing definite in mind except making a change.

"The whole corporate attitude was hard to deal with," she says. "It was viciously competitive at times."

Harrison started substitute teaching and knew she had found her calling.

"I loved being in front of the class and helping people learn," she says. "It felt right." That's when Harrison decided to enroll at Boise State to become a science teacher.

"I was used to going to a small college," she says of her transition to Boise State. "But I have been im-