



By Bob Evancho

The Bronco Bunch

Boise State graduates help propel the Treasure Valley work force

Imagine, for a moment, the Treasure Valley work force without Boise State. Think of the thousands of people affiliated with the university who would no longer deliver goods and provide services to Greater Boise each day.

No big deal? What exactly *do* Boise State people do?

Well, for starters they teach our kids, catch bad guys, care for our sick, own and run many local businesses, work for the government, manufacture computer

components and run corporate offices. Boise State people take CAT scans, count money, coach kids, fix fenders, perform surgery, create art, program computers and help the homeless. Look around ... Boise State workingmen and workingwomen are everywhere in Greater Boise. Some are graduates, some are current students holding down full-time jobs, some are workers honing their skills through the university's short-term programs. They are chefs, social workers, executives, engineers, educators, accountants, mechanics, medics.

Boise State workers ply their trades in virtually every sector of the Greater Boise work force. If you're the parent of a K-12 student, your child almost certainly has been and will be taught by a number of Boise State graduates. (In the Boise and Meridian school districts — Idaho's two largest — the percentages of certified staff

with a degree from Boise State are about 43 and 36, respectively.) If you've ever needed a nurse or a cop or someone to fix your engine or do your taxes, there's a good chance the person providing that service is a graduate of or has received training from Boise State University.

As a primary supplier of employees — from the rank and file to corporate higher-ups — Boise State is a vital cog in the machine that drives our local economy. "Boise State's role is absolutely pivotal to the area's economic development," says Shirl Boyce of the Boise Metro Chamber of Commerce. "Just by the sheer number of people it graduates and sends out into the [local work force], I'd say it is the [area's] leading provider of skilled workers."

And most of those workers, says Dick Rapp, director

of the Boise State Career Center, tend to join or remain in the Treasure Valley work force after they graduate. According to an annual survey that the Career Center conducts to determine the percentage of new graduates with four-year degrees who have found work in the Boise area, the overriding number has stayed put. Since the mid-1990s the percentage of those reporting jobs in the Treasure Valley has never been lower than 75 percent and rose to a whopping 89 percent in 2001.

A primary reason why so many Boise State grads enjoy these opportunities, says Rapp, is because of Boise's diverse economy, which is reflected in its wide-scale work force — current economic woes notwithstanding. “There are [Boise-area] jobs in high tech, health care, small business and law enforcement,” Rapp adds, “and we have the state’s cultural center, state government offices, corporate headquarters and two of the largest school districts in the state. There are a whole array of employment opportunities that allow our graduates to stay here. And over the last 30 years those opportunities have steadily grown.”

Rapp points out that while a few of Boise State’s programs have a high percentage of graduates who usually have to leave the area to find employment — construction management and geophysics, for example — the majority of the university’s academic offerings are geared toward the Treasure Valley job market. “I think we’ve got most of the waterfront covered,” Rapp adds.

In the Greater Boise work force, Broncos are ubiquitous — take the Ada County Sheriff’s Department, for example. “Higher education is a growing demand in law enforcement,” says Ada County Undersheriff Gary Raney



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(BA, criminal justice administration, '86). “Probably a third of our deputies have attended or are attending BSU and I expect that number to increase in the years to come.”

Or take Micron. Of the 10,400 people employed by the semiconductor giant, 770 (7.4 percent) have a degree or a certificate from Boise State, including CEO Steve Appleton and several corporate officers.

“As we have grown [at Micron], the curriculum and the number of graduates and the breadth of the graduates at Boise State has continued to expand,” says Appleton (BBA, management, '82).

“So today Boise State not only supplies some of our more visible employees when we’re talking about the engineering program, but we have a lot of people throughout the organization, both in operations and administration along with sales and marketing functions, who have come from the univer-

sity. Those programs have benefitted us tremendously, and they have grown with the company as its needs have grown as well.”

Raney and Appleton aren’t the only high-ranking officials who recognize the contributions of Boise State alums to their particular work force.

“Boise State University continues to play a key role in providing the Boise School District with quality, well-educated teacher candidates who are providing a first-rate education for our students,” says Ed Davis, superintendent of Boise schools. “Working with a university like Boise State in this fashion benefits our students, and in turn our community.”

Derek Carissimi, vice president of human resources and support services at Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, also recognizes the crucial role Boise State graduates play at the Boise

hospital. "We have a large number of BSU nursing grads as part of Saint Al's nursing staff. We always find them to be well-trained and prepared to do bedside nursing," he says. "Saint Al's aggressively recruits the BSU graduating class each spring to hopefully attract these excellent nurses to our staff."

And nurses aren't the only Boise State people who work at Saint Al's, which employs nearly 3,000 workers. Graduates from the university's health sciences programs such as respiratory therapy and radiologic sciences are also in demand. "Again, active recruitment has resulted in a large number of BSU grads among Saint Al's work force," comments Carissimi. "We are pleased to have them in all the fields our work force covers."

Adds Raney, "BSU has been an invaluable contributor to law enforcement in the Treasure Valley. As law and policy become more and more complex, criminal justice agencies are seeking college degrees in their applicants. Many law-enforcement agencies, especially the larger ones like the Sheriff's Office, stress the importance of higher education, and without BSU we would be severely limited on where we send our employees for courses to develop their knowledge."

Yes, Broncos are the backbone of the Treasure Valley work force. According to the Boise State Alumni Association, there are approximately 33,500 graduates living in Greater Boise, of which an estimated 28,900 are still of working age.

And these numbers don't include the thousands of Treasure Valley workers who have received some kind of non-credit training from the university, primarily from the Selland College of

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Applied Technology and the College of Business and Economics. While many of those who avail themselves of these services are not listed as graduates, they, too, join the area's ranks as educated and trained employees who are able to keep pace with the changing skill requirements to meet the area's economic needs.

"Last year we touched 13,500 people," says Larry Barnhardt, dean of the Selland College, "and we are reaching between 13,000 and 15,000 people every single year through customized non-credit training, our adult basic education programs, and our degree and certificate programs."

As the school fulfilling the community college function for the Treasure Valley, the Selland College's role is equally important to the vitality of the area's work force, says Barnhardt. "The vast majority of American workers require some kind of training beyond high school, but not all at the four-year level," the dean says. "With new technologies coming into the workplace process all the time, workers need skill upgrades.

"The vast majority of people working in the Treasure Valley are working for companies that are dynamic and changing, and employees need training to keep pace with those changes. Our Center for Workforce Training is geared specifically to those incumbent workers, people who are already in the work force."

Perhaps what makes Boise State most vital to the Treasure Valley work force, says Rapp, is its willingness to adjust to the area's economic needs.

"This is not just driven by what employers are telling us they need, but just as much or more by the demands of students who want to be prepared for developing career opportunities," comments the Career Center director. "As the economy of the area evolves and as technology changes the way work is accomplished, the university will add new programs and adapt current ones to address the needs of students and employers.

"For example, the expansion of the Boise convention center and the growth of tourism in the area may well spawn either some new programs or some specialties within current programs to address the growing need for professionals related to tourism, convention planning and hospitality. Another area I predict we will address will be to provide more specialized education to meet the needs of an aging population."

As Boise continues to grow, it is a near certainty that Boise State graduates will continue to fill more positions in the area work force. Fortunately, the university's track record of adaptability bodes well for future students.

"The history of Boise State," says Rapp, "is that we have a culture that allows us to recognize windows of opportunity and to move more quickly than is typical for institutions of higher education to respond positively."