

# INVESTIGATE BOISE

## Field School for Urban Affairs

By Mike Journee

The success of a summer workshop for students interested in the wide swath of Boise's history and the city's inner workings could lead to similar offerings for Boise State's College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs (SSPA).

"Investigate Boise," a two-part, 10-day class billed as "a field school for urban affairs," was so well-received by students that SSPA Dean Melissa Lavitt (below) is using it as a prototype for the kinds of partnerships and programs the college would like to offer the community.

"Downtown Boise's place as the center of our civic, commercial and cultural life, and its fascinating and colorful history, make these kinds of partnerships a natural for our college, our students and the community," says Lavitt. "I want us to be seen more and more as a force and a resource within the community."

Led by Boise State history professor Todd Shallat and Boise City Councilman David Eberle, a doctoral-level economist, "Investigate Boise" was a first-of-its-kind program. The workshop featured a slate of expert guests from Boise State, governmental agencies and elected officials, as well as tours of the city's historical, cultural and institutional landmarks.

Boise State senior and lifelong Boise resident Hayley Perkins says the unique class caught her attention because of her interest in city planning and the insight it offered into little known things about her hometown.

"I had no idea about all of the old buildings that were razed in downtown Boise during the '60s and the '70s," says Perkins, a communication major. Partly because of the class, she may pursue a



Melissa Harris Hartley

Incorporating a city's classic architecture, such as Boise's turreted Idanha Hotel, into current urban design is key to successful city planning. A new class in the College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs focused on the city's past and present growth.

master's degree in community and regional planning, a planned master's degree program at Boise State that could be up and running by the fall of 2010.

Plans to offer the workshop again are developing. Taught in a donated storefront in June and July, the class was "designed to be a place-based approach to a study of Boise in all its facets," says Shallat.

Creating awareness about Boise's past and an understanding of how today's decisions impact the city's future are at the heart of the lesson in citizenship that Shallat and Eberle hope to impart.

"My favorite buildings downtown are the old ones," says Perkins. "It breaks my heart to know that we could have had so many more."



Carrie Quimby