

THE X-FACTOR

Women Leaders at Boise State



They're smart, they're savvy, and they're leading the way at Boise State University. For (clockwise from upper left) Provost **Sona Andrews**, College of Education Dean **Diane Boothe**, College of Engineering Dean **Cheryl Schrader**, and Vice President of Finance **Stacy Pearson**, being female and being at the top brings both challenges and opportunities.

During a roundtable discussion, these Boise State leaders talked about their careers, their inspirations, and what they've learned over the years with *FOCUS* writers **Janelle Brown, Kathleen Craven** and **Sherry Squires**. Below are excerpts of what they had to say. For a complete version of the interview, visit news.boisestate.edu/focus.

What is it about Boise State and its culture that seems to encourage women to take leadership roles?

Schrader: Every day I read of a university appointing a first woman dean or first woman provost or the first woman vice president, and Boise State has passed that. I think that part of what attracts women, or anybody to Boise State and Boise, is that it's rather entrepreneurial. It has that western culture and you have a group of very creative and active people who are looking for a place to make a difference.

Andrews: I think it is pretty remarkable at Boise State that we have a number of women in a variety of positions of leadership at different levels. So it's not just at the vice president level, or just at the dean level or just at the department chair level but throughout all the levels. That's not unique to Boise State, but it certainly puts us in a class that is different than many other institutions.

Pearson: In my career at Boise State, I have felt this institution has been very open to women progressing in their careers and encouraging and providing professional development training. I have really liked the environment and wanted to stay here.

Boothe: And it's not just women. We have a variety of diverse ethnic groups and the opportunity to work with socioeconomic levels that are diverse as well. So I think that when women are in these roles, there are many opportunities for them, and then they are supported once they are in that role.

Andrews: Bob Kustra actually creates an environment here at the very top that makes this a very hospitable climate and environment for women and all kinds of individuals. That tone gets set at the presidential level, you know. I think Bob's hired two female vice presidents, and that speaks really highly of him. He works with women no differently than the way he would work with men.

How would you describe your leadership style?

Boothe: I can start on this one because being dean of the College of Education is unique in that we serve a multiplicity of constituencies, and it's important to develop strong public relations with our public and private school agencies and educational partners. So my leadership style is collaborative, academic, encouraging people to high ideals, and then making an effort to motivate others while also being sure that I exemplify the goals and expectations that I have for them.

Pearson: My role in administration is understanding how we need to move the university forward. So I need to listen to everybody, find out what the goals are and then figure out a way to make that happen from a resource standpoint. It is very important that it be a collaborative relationship and also

that we go through the difficult task of setting priorities for when and how we want to do things. It requires quite a bit of listening, interaction, feedback, processing information, putting it out to the rest of the leadership team to help us make decisions and move forward.

Andrews: I'm not sure I have a particular leadership style. But I can tell you the kinds of things I try to pay attention to. As provost, I try to make sure that I continue to keep a vision for everybody, and that I make sure, as Stacy mentioned, that I listen. I ask a lot of questions and if I were to characterize a style, it would be one where I try not to get too much in the way — at least I hope I don't. I've got two deans at the table to tell on me. I try to make sure that I understand where the institution wants to go and I help other people get to the capacity they need to be at in order to do the things that they want to do. And sometimes I just try to stay out of the way.

Schrader: As dean of the College of Engineering, I really think there are four parts to my role. One is catalyst, to help formulate a vision. One is a facilitator, which is to try and make it possible for people to achieve their goals. The third is being an advocate for the college and the university, and the fourth is really the ambassador role outside of the university, with the community and industries and government.

Everyone's heard about the superwoman — the woman who earns the bacon, fries it up in the pan and does everything else. Was that ever an intimidating idea for any of you ?

Pearson: Well, I was intimidated by it. I came through my education period when it seemed like the people who I looked at in my profession were doing it all. They had these jobs, and they had these families and all these responsibilities, and they led these glamorous lives, but they never said how it is that you did all that. So I had to go out and try to do it and there was a time period when it was pretty tough. It wasn't until somebody else said to me, "You really can't do it all, and you know

How real is the glass ceiling? How have you broken through it?

Schrader: I think there is a glass ceiling. I actually think there is always another one, so there are many levels of them. It's like the Bertram Russell story with the turtle: The world is on the back of a large tortoise, but what's the tortoise standing on? The old lady says, "Very clever, young man, very clever, but it's tortoises all the way down." I think that when you bump

me that that was really true. I don't know that I've found myself inhibited much. The other part of that is considering, "What is my glass ceiling? How high is it that I want to go?" I've always been pretty satisfied with my career path, but sometimes I just wanted to do something different. You know, break out of the mold. So that was tougher for me, because I felt like, well, this is the profession you're in, and if you want to try something like this, you're going to have to get another degree or you're really going to have to take a risk. I've always just wanted to grow and learn new things and have something new to look forward to, so for me the glass ceiling was more just getting in a place where I wasn't growing or learning something new.

Boothe: In my area, I've certainly bumped up against it, but it hasn't been in the way or it hasn't made my experiences extremely difficult. I think it's something that I've addressed in the field of education by gaining all the experience that I could, by pursuing a doctorate and working on higher education experiences, and by networking within the community and within the academic field. Those are all tools for addressing that problem.

What message would you give to other women to help them achieve success?

Boothe: Believe in yourself.

Schrader: Be yourself. Set your goals thoroughly and determine what is necessary and pursue those goals. Stick with them, persevere. Find out what your interests really are, not what other people tell you they should be. Do what you love.



From left, Schrader, Andrews, Pearson and Boothe are among a number of women leaders at BSU.

what, maybe you don't have to," that I was really able to take a look at that and make some changes in my life.

Boothe: I never really considered the term superwoman. I was always busy and high energy and spent time with a career, raising a family, furthering my education. I'm critical of myself, so when I don't do well, that would bother me. But, I think it's something that we just did because it needed to be done, and so sometimes we tried to be all things to all people. But then we just had to step back and take a look and regroup and move on again.

up against these glass ceilings, they move. I don't know that they necessarily shatter and are completely gone, but the whole point of bumping up against them is there's usually a little more room next time, for you or for somebody else.

Pearson: I think that's a really good point. I agree with that, but in my profession there are a lot of women in business and accounting and finance, and it was always presented to me as, "You do good work, you learn your profession, you put out a quality product and you'll do fine." So it seemed to

Pearson: You're responsible for your own happiness, and if something isn't working, you need to find out what it is and make the change, and not wait for someone else to do it.

Andrews: And don't let somebody discourage you and tell you that you can't do something. I mean, I've had that happen a number of times in my life where people have said, "Oh, well, you'll never be able to do that." And that just sort of makes me feel like I want to do that. Just simple things, like the first time I told somebody I was going to run a marathon, they said, "Oh, you'll never be able to do that." Well, you know what? Of course I'll be able to do that if I train and do the right things.

What do you see as the biggest challenge in your career in the next year?

Andrews: We all work for the same place, and I think that the challenge that many of us face is that there are so many opportunities for Boise State right now. So many. And the challenge is trying to figure out how to have the time and the resources to be able to do them all. There are incredible things going on at this institution. Every time I hear of an idea that one of the faculty, staff and students has, I want to say, "I'd really like to spend time for us to think about that, to plan for that and to find the resources." That is the most challenging and frustrating part of our jobs. We are fortunate to be in an organization that is not short of ideas and not short of energy and not short of potential.

Boothe: I would certainly say advancing the goals of the College of Education. This is a dynamic forward-moving institution and we want to make sure

that we keep pace, and that during the next 10 years we keep up that momentum as well.

Schrader: I agree absolutely with Soná's description. So much potential, so many ideas, great opportunities. This is the perfect time to advance, but that's also what's frustrating, because you would love to be able to do it all. Think of where we could go, and think of the people who could have their dreams turn to reality.

Pearson: For me it's how to operationalize all of this. We have just fabulous ideas and we work on solutions as to how get them going. But they are often competing with each other, and I'm the person who oftentimes has to bring in the, "OK, this is what we can do with this amount of money or resources." That's the frustrating part, because I know that this other one is just as important, but this one is a little more doable now. We have to make those choices even though sometimes I wish we could do them at the same time.

Schrader: You know the exciting thing about this is that often you come up with very creative ways of getting where you need to go, that you might not have taken the time to consider. That's exciting to me here, because when folks get frustrated, you know, when I'm worried, there is the opportunity to think outside of the box. I think that's encouraged here at Boise State, probably because we've had to do that.

What about your job do you find most rewarding?

Schrader: Helping other people achieve their goals. I think that it has to do with servant leadership. There's just

nothing better than finding that way to help a person move forward.

Andrews: I would agree. I think that for me the biggest highs in this job, the things that make me smile and at the end of the day make me realize I'm going to come back the next day and want to do it all over again, are when things happen to the people who work and study here. When a faculty member ends up getting something published because we made it possible for them to have the piece of equipment that they needed. Or a student at graduation just cheering because they got their diploma and walking across the stage. I think you do this because you really are interested in doing things for other people.

Pearson: I think I'm very similar. The people I work with, the people's lives we impact ... I think that this is a very honorable profession to be in, working on something that is going to improve lives in our community and the community itself. And it's very fun to be a part of that, everything from a student who graduates successfully to an employee who has gotten a promotion or learned something new in the faculty publications. Because I know I am the administrator, but I get to be included in all of the great things that are going on here. And I feel like my role is helping remove the obstacles for some of those things to happen, and it's very satisfying.

Schrader: Definitely the people. Engendering a shared commitment to excellence, students, working with the caliber of women that I work with. Also, collaborating with all faculty members and staff members who make our profession one in which we can all be proud.

Women Teachers Go to the Head of the Class

BY KATHLEEN CRAVEN

They're professional, accomplished and among the best in their fields. Over the past eight years, three Boise State women have been named Idaho Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching: Stephanie Witt, political science, won in 1998; Pam Gehrke, nursing, in 1999; and Alicia Garza, Spanish, in 2003. This prestigious award honors the best and brightest college and university teachers who are not only stars in the classroom but also in the lives of their students and in their communities.

With more than 43 years of combined teaching experience, these three women work in very diverse fields. Even so, they have at least one thing in common — a desire to help students, both men and women, find their own success in life despite the challenges that may stand in the way.

"The students here are fantastic,"

says Witt, who currently teaches a graduate-level class in public policy while also fulfilling the role of associate vice president of academic affairs. "They aren't pampered, by and large. Most are working and have more life experience than the people I knew in college. I've grown to really like work-

helping them achieve success in both the classroom and in their fields of research. They look to their coworkers as role models and supporters.

When Witt first came to Boise State in 1989, she met women like sociologist Pat Dorman, who was instrumental in paving the way for a

"It's a luxury to teach in your area of expertise."

ing with that kind of student."

"It's a different type of student," says Garza, a professor of Mexican American literature and culture who is the daughter of Mexican immigrants. Comparing her students to the more affluent group she taught at the University of Arizona, she says, "Here students work and have families. They are more responsible, more account-

able, and they want to get their money's worth."

While teaching these types of students requires more effort, it also reaps more rewards, the women say. And that's a good part of what keeps them here in Boise. But all three women also cited their colleagues as key to

women's studies program, and other strong women who became her mentors. "These women fought the fights so people my age didn't have to anymore," she says.

"When I look at other women here at Boise State, I'm so impressed," Garza says. "They're so good at what they do." Researchers like Susan Shadle in chemistry and Helen Lojek in English, and colleagues like Heike Henderson, who battled cancer, had a baby and earned tenure all in the space of a few years. "All these women could be working at some big research institution, but like me they are here balancing teaching and research."

That balance can be tough, all three women say, especially with the added demands that accompany today's tech-savvy students. Gehrke does most of her teaching online, requiring hours of e-mails and discussion boards in addition to time spent on office hours and lesson preparation. And it doesn't stop there.



Gehrke: Her BSU colleagues are her role models and supporters.



JOHN KELLY PHOTOS

Garza: BSU students are responsible and accountable.

“I get really involved,” says Gerhke, who teaches a class on public health policy and politics. “I have to have hands-on projects, not just reading. My students go to policy meetings related to nursing, and they just produced an electronic newsletter out of those meetings.”

Witt also places value on activities beyond the classroom walls. “I used to tell my students that it’s not like

an I.V. where the knowledge just drips in. They have to get out of neutral to learn. I use case studies to apply materials, as well as short papers, small groups and applied projects.”

But when things get tough, these women have a strong support network they can fall back on. And that’s important when there’s a family added into

the mix, Gehrke says. “At times I’ve had a kid on a little hospital bed crushed into the corner of my office,” she says. She also recalls times when she and her colleagues covered for one another, watching a sick child so the other could go teach a class.

These experiences don’t detract from teaching, Gehrke says. Instead, they can help build empathy and compassion for students who may be juggling similar personal and professional demands.

Another key to their success, all three say, is that their fields of interest were a perfect fit with Boise State. “I came here because the job looked like it was written for me,” Garza says. “It’s a luxury to teach in your area of expertise.”



Witt: Learning extends beyond the walls of the classroom.

And it’s the good fortune of Boise State students to be surrounded by professors who are so dedicated to their jobs. Noting the university’s proximity to Idaho’s Capitol and other government offices, Witt asks, “What better place than BSU for a political scientist?”

Luckily, for Boise State students, the answer is none.

SCHRADER WINS AWARD

Cheryl Schrader, dean of the College of Engineering at Boise State, has been honored as one of 11 recipients nationwide of the 2005 Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring.

Schrader received the national award at ceremonies held in November at the White House executive office complex in Washington, D.C. The award, supported and administered by the National Science Foundation, includes a \$10,000 grant for continued mentoring work.

“I’m very honored to receive this presidential award,” Schrader says. “I believe that mentoring is the common thread in ‘K through gray’ that will help us address the national technology work force crisis, produce an educated citizenry, and attract women and underrepresented minorities to exciting and rewarding careers.”

The presidential award honors individuals and institutions that have enhanced the

participation of underrepresented groups, such as women, minorities and people with disabilities, in science, mathematics and engineering at all levels.

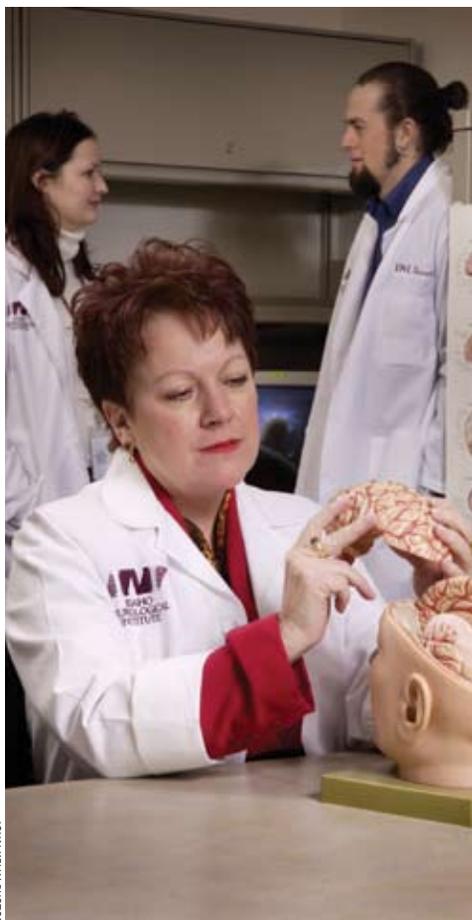
Since its inception in 1996, the program has recognized 97 individuals at 68 institutions nationwide.

Schrader, who joined Boise State’s faculty in 2003 as dean of the College of Engineering, was lauded at the White House ceremonies for her extensive outreach

efforts to encourage women and other underrepresented groups to pursue and excel at careers in engineering.

She has individually mentored more than 40 students over the course of her career, and has also provided support for female faculty at Boise State. Under her tenure, 66 percent of the faculty hired in the College of Engineering have been from underrepresented groups.

Making New Discoveries Inspires These Boise State Researchers



JOHN KELLY PHOTOS

From left: Psychology professor Pennie Seibert, mechanical engineering professor Michelle Sabick, and chemistry professor Tomoko Fujiwara.

BY JANELLE BROWN

Pennie Seibert's eyes light up when she talks about what she's learned about the human brain and how it functions.

"It used to be when someone had a stroke, there wasn't much that could be done. Now we know stroke victims can make dramatic improvements," says Seibert, a professor of psychology at Boise State and director of research for the Idaho Neurological Institute at Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center in Boise.

Seibert's research into the brain's so-called "neuroplasticity" — its ability to repair and regenerate — is

helping scientists find new ways to treat strokes, neurological injuries sustained in accidents, and conditions such as Parkinson's disease, sleep disorders or back pain.

"It's an incredibly exciting field of study because our understanding of the brain is constantly changing," Seibert says. "The potential is unlimited for what we might be able to do."

Seibert is one of many Boise State women professors who sustain active and productive research programs while teaching college courses and interacting with students in both the classroom and the lab. They say being

female in what are often male-dominated fields makes them appreciate the value of diversity, and the importance of serving as mentors to all their students.

They also say they love the challenge of their work — and the opportunity to make a difference.

"What gets me going is having a burning question I want to answer," says Michelle Sabick, a mechanical engineering professor and co-director of the Center for Orthopaedic and Biomechanics Research.

Sabick studies how human joints respond to forces — such as when a

basketball player leaps high and lands hard — by using the same animation technology that the film industry uses to create characters such as Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings*. Her innovative research could lead to a new understanding of how to prevent sports-related injuries, and how to rehabilitate athletes when injuries occur.

understand how exciting science is, how fantastic it is to do this kind of work,” says Fujiwara, who worked in the pharmaceutical industry in her native Japan before enrolling at the Kyoto Institute of Technology as a nontraditional student and earning a bachelor’s, master’s and Ph.D.

Fujiwara is developing new biomaterials that could someday lead to

tachment, cleft palate and cartilage degeneration in knees.

Inside Oxford’s lab, student technicians dressed in colorful lab coats chat easily with each other as they run tests and record results. Oxford counsels her students to take their time on experiments, and to get it right.

“There’s reward in designing and carrying out experiments to the best of one’s ability. I tell my students, you can’t rush things,” she says.

Like others interviewed for this article, Amy Moll understands that she is a role model simply because of who she is and what she has accomplished. Moll, chair of the Department of Materials Science and Engineering, runs a thriving research program that involves developing new materials to make microchips smaller and more powerful (page 17). More than a dozen students work with her in her lab.

“I try to provide support for my students and help them achieve their goals,” Moll says. A former Hewlett-Packard engineer and manager, Moll also helps her students hone skills they will need to succeed in the workplace, including communication skills. “If you can’t clearly explain what you’ve accomplished, then your work won’t have the impact it should,” she says.

Moll says she’s been pleased to see an increasing number of women students enroll in the materials science program, both at the undergraduate and graduate level. Having more women working in engineering and the sciences benefits everyone, she says.

“More diversity means you gain more approaches to solving problems,” says Moll. “Different people bring different strengths.”

“It’s an incredibly exciting field of study because our understanding of the brain is constantly changing,” Seibert says. “The potential is unlimited for what we might be able to do.”

“I always knew I would be an engineer of some kind, and combining biology and engineering is perfect for me,” says Sabick, who played soccer in college.

For chemistry professor Tomoko Fujiwara, sharing her enthusiasm for research with her students is important. “I want my students to

more effective ways to administer chemotherapy and other drugs. In her laboratory, Fujiwara is working to synthesize cavity-shaped molecules that would serve as “capsules” to deliver drugs to a targeted area of the body. After the drugs are released at a tumor or other site, the biodegradable molecules would then harmlessly disintegrate.

Fujiwara says she finds cultural differences between Japanese and American approaches to research and education. She looks for ways to build on the strengths of both systems “I’m very flexible. I want my students to find their own dreams, and then to pursue them,” she says.

Biology professor Julie Oxford also takes a flexible approach to encouraging her students. “I’m not a sink-or-swim kind of person. Given the proper guidance, anyone can learn to do science. It’s the process of learning that is essential,” says Oxford, who conducts research that may someday help scientists find cures for ailments ranging from early onset arthritis to fetal alcohol syndrome, retinal de-



Biology professor Julie Oxford takes a flexible approach to teaching her students

Administrators play major role in BSU's growth

BY SHERRY SQUIRES

Jane Buser is in her 33rd year with Boise State. She began her career on a relatively quiet little campus where everyone knew one another.

"We are now a large metropolitan institution," she says. "This is certainly the most exciting time in my career with the university. Being open to change creates wonderful and exciting opportunities."

Many of those opportunities — and the responsibility for incorporating vast changes on campus — fall to the leadership of Boise State's non-academic units. Buser's counterparts across campus have learned to work in an ever-changing environment to make Boise State a better place to learn and work.

Part of Leah Barrett's role is to help students feel connected to a growing campus. As executive director of the Student Union and Student Involvement, Barrett oversees the Women's Center, Cultural Center and Children's Center and serves as an adviser to student leaders, among other duties. She works to build community among Boise State's students.

"Today, we talk about community being paramount to student success and we invest in ways to intentionally build it," she says. A new campus Recreation Center and planned expansion of the Student Union are two examples.

As leaders in Boise State's financial offices, Chris Rosenbaum and Jo Ellen DiNucci deal with the university's fiscal needs and help pave the way for Boise State's success.

Rosenbaum says that takes a full



Boise State administrators gather in the Student Union, from left, Sabine Klahr, Barbara Fortin, Jane Buser, Chris Rosenbaum, Lisa Parker, Kara Brascia and Leah Barrett.

understanding of the campus and its unique and complex needs.

"On a daily basis my staff and I

connect with dozens of people across campus to discuss policy, resolve budget concerns, interpret financial

information, and report financial outcomes for decision making,” she says. “I’ve learned that it’s critical to ensure our goals are sustainable and that there’s buy-in for the shared outcomes.”

Marcia Belcheir is the coordinator of Institutional Assessment and associate director of Institutional Analysis, Assessment and Reporting. “I love trying to anticipate what information would be valuable to help guide Boise State University to the next level, then figuring out a way to get it,” she says. “Change is inevitable, so you might as well anticipate it when you can and find the benefits after it’s occurred, even if you didn’t anticipate it.”

Lisa Parker, senior associate athletic director and the senior female administrator in the Department of Athletics, joined Boise State in 2003. She says it was the excitement of all of the changes that first drew her to the university.

Parker says she thrives in an environment where she is part of the change and where she finds herself surrounded by many talented and motivated individuals. As a leader, she sees part of her role as helping to give those around her a sense of calm in the midst of all of the change.

“I think leading by example is foremost for me,” she says. “You have to be willing to roll up your sleeves and dive in with the task yourself before you can ask someone else to do something.”

Barbara Fortin’s office has helped the university grow with increased enrollment as well as higher admission standards. As director of Admissions, she says in the midst of all of the expansion she has found it most

challenging to remain nimble with limited resources. But she has found that leading with good communication and follow-through has helped her unit charge forward.

“Even if resources are tight, if you are able to empower a creative group of people, you can accomplish amazing things,” she says.

As director of International Programs, Sabine Klahr’s mission is to internationalize the campus. Klahr says it is sometimes difficult to balance being an advocate for her area and understanding where the rest of the university is coming from.

“You really have to know the university and all key players extremely well and have really good diplomacy skills,” she says. “The stress sometimes comes from working across all entities. It’s easy to get bogged down in my world of internationalization and think that everyone understands our goals.”

For Kara Brascia, director of the Service-Learning program that facilitates community-based learning for students, finding ways to cultivate change in a large institution has been a learning process. But she has a sense that her work is making a real difference and she enjoys finding creative and innovative ways to get things done.

She comments that a leader must “be able to manage her own strengths and weaknesses to remain productive, efficient and interpersonally effective.”

As one of a number of women in leadership roles at Boise State, Bookstore director Kim Thomas says she believes whether intentional or unintentional, she and others serve as role models.

“It never hurts to assume you are

shaping others, as it makes you more conscious to be better yourself,” she says.

RIEDEL GIVES BACK IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE

While hundreds of women play vital roles as Boise State employees, there are many more off-campus contributors such as volunteers, donors and active alumni.

Debra Riedel fits all three bills.

Riedel (BM, music education, ’77; MA, music performance, ’99) gives back to her alma mater in many ways, most notably as the current president of the Boise State Foundation, the university’s nonprofit fundraising and gift-receiving arm.

“This is a very exciting time to be involved in Boise State’s evolution,” she says. “I have a real passion for the institution and what it stands for and the great things it does for our community; so much is happening, we can’t get the word out fast enough.”



Riedel

A vice president/financial adviser in wealth management with Smith Barney since 1983, Riedel has served on the Foundation board of directors since 2000 and serves on the executive committee, as well as the investment, planned and major gifts, and real estate committees.

In 2003 she established an endowment for the Debra Riedel Music Scholarship, which is awarded annually to BSU music majors. She and her husband Kelly Turk (BM, music performance, ’84) are both music lovers and musicians (she’s a pianist and he plays the guitar), but both make a living in the financial world. “Music is our passion, but it isn’t easy making a living that way,” she says.

A member of the Boise State Alumni Association, she is also a past board chair of the Treasure Valley United Way and a past recipient of the Tribute to Women in Industry Award.

— Bob Evancho

Kathy Kustra Plays Key Role Behind the Scenes



Kathy Kustra poses with Boise Mayor Dave Bieter (left) and Bob Kustra following her husband's installation as Boise State's sixth president in February 2004.

BY KATHLEEN CRAVEN

One of Boise State's better-known ambassadors doesn't have a prestigious title tacked to her office door. In fact, she doesn't even have an office door. But mention her name on or off campus in circles ranging from nonprofit organizations to arts groups, and you're sure to get a reaction. The same holds true in the Statehouse. In fact, after she offered advice to lawmakers on solutions to the Medicaid crisis, *The Idaho Statesman* named Kathy Kustra, the wife of Boise State President Bob Kustra, as one of the most influential people in the Idaho Legislature for 2005.

Not bad for the new kid in town. The Kustras moved to Boise in July 2003 when Bob Kustra became Boise State's sixth president. Before the move, Kathy Kustra was special adviser for Medicaid under Kentucky Gov. Paul Patton, a position that capitalized on her years of experience in both the

public and private sectors. As director of the Illinois Department of Public Aid years earlier, she managed a \$5.2 billion budget and 9,000 employees. That experience came in handy when her first assignment in Kentucky was to dig out of a \$600 million Medicaid deficit.

These days she is juggling a different load, albeit one she finds just as challenging and rewarding. Although not an employee of Boise State, Kustra does take seriously her role as a representative of the university.

Whether she's attending a black-tie gala, a gallery opening, or a Bronco football game, she's always "on" in her role as the president's wife. That's not to say it's all work and no play. "I get to attend a lot of interesting and impressive events in the community and at the university," she says, "events I might not be invited to otherwise."

Kustra is also active off campus,

serving as a board member for the Idaho Humane Society and the Idaho Shakespeare Festival. She and her husband try to support as many community events as possible, including the Log Cabin Literary Center, the Idaho Humanities Council and Ballet Idaho, to name a few.

"Kathy is a great addition to the Festival board first because she loves the theater," says Mark Hofflund, ISF managing director. "She is a tremendous advocate for public support of art, education and the pillars of our culture."

Between events, she's a sounding board for presidential issues and activities ranging from addresses to the faculty to Bob Kustra's successful radio show, *New Horizons in Education*.

"My role with Bob is like that of 99.9 percent of spouses," she says. "We have been bouncing things off of each other since the beginning. We just trust each other's intellect and judgment, I guess."

Her real joy, however, comes when this self-described "foodie" combines her passion for cooking with her many entertainment duties. Two dinners with the Kustras recently garnered bids of \$5,000 each to support the Bronco Athletic Association; another dinner was auctioned off for the Boise Athletic Association. The winning bidders got a meal cooked by Kathy Kustra and served by Bob. The couple also hosts numerous gatherings at their home to welcome new vice presidents and deans to the university, gather Foundation board members, entertain lawmakers, and more.

"Everywhere we go we are representatives of the university," she says. "It's been an extremely enriching experience."