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Top, clockwise from top left: Katey Irwin, A.J. McGillis, Lee Marks, Ryan Smith, Janet George and Elyse Panzella. Right: Saud Al-Madani. Below: Nick Alex.

On its path toward greater excel-
 lence in research and teaching,
BOISE STATE continues to be enhanced by
 the depth and breadth of its diverse student body.
 From brand new freshmen right out of high school to doc-
 toral candidates, students contribute to the university's
 stature and reputational currency, while profiting from its
 award-winning faculty, innovative programs and ground-
 breaking research. This issue of **FOCUS** takes a brief look at



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The STUDENT EXPERIENCE at Boise S

Photos by John Kelly and Carrie Quinney

The Graduate Student

BY JANELLE BROWN

Name: Katey Irwin

Year in school: Graduate student

Major: Master's of science in bioinformatics through the Interdisciplinary Studies Program

Resides: University Square Apartments

Quick Glance: Irwin is one of 20 outstanding graduate students named to the first cohort of the university's new Graduate Residential Scholars Program. The scholars live in campus housing and work within an academic unit as a teaching, research or service assistant. Based on current lodging fees, graduate school fee rates and stipends, the total annual value of each award exceeds \$26,000.



8:20 A.M.

Hair pulled back in a no-nonsense ponytail, sleep still lingering in her brown eyes, Katey Irwin greets fellow graduate student Amanda Bruesch outside the Student Recreation Center. They head inside for some semi-serious sweating. It's a routine Irwin follows most days.

"I have to get here in the morning, even though it's hard, because if I wait until the afternoon I'm too tired or busy and I don't come," says Irwin, striding in place on the elliptical trainer.

Irwin (BS, biology, '05) knows a bit about perseverance. The first person in her family to graduate from college, she then won a prestigious scholarship from Boise State to pursue graduate studies.

Irwin is crafting her own interdisciplinary master's program in the cutting-edge field of bioinformatics, the science of using data analysis to understand biology. Someday she'd like to earn a Ph.D. and teach at a university.

9:40 A.M.

After a quick dash back to her apartment to change her clothes and shower, Irwin heads to the Micron Engineering Center for her first class of the day, Introduction to Computer Science. It's an undergraduate course, but Irwin



Above, Katey Irwin, left, meets fellow graduate student Amanda Bruesch outside the Student Recreation Center. Left, Irwin starts her day by working out on one of the REC's elliptical trainers. It's a routine she follows most days while working on her master's in bioinformatics.

enrolled to beef up her computer skills, an important component of bioinformatics.

12:15 P.M.

Lunch is a quesadilla with salsa, prepared inside her apartment. Irwin shares the living space with two roommates who are also graduate residential scholars, but she has a private bedroom. The apartments are brand new and show it. Irwin, who commuted daily from Kuna during the four years she worked on her bachelor's degree, relishes living on campus.

"I finally get to just be a student. I'm just a few minutes away from my classes, I can go to all the activities on campus in the evening and downtown Boise is right here," she says. "It makes everything so easy."

1:40 P.M.

Irwin and about a dozen other students in Advanced Topics in Molecular Biology class listen as Bruesch discusses an article "Mitochondrial DNA Mutations," published in a scientific journal. During the semester each student will give a similar presentation. Irwin likes the class. "There are so many different topics, it keeps you on your toes," she says. "It gives you a sense of how much research is going on."



3 P.M.

Irwin and Noriko Hazeki-Taylor, a postdoctoral researcher, peer over an ultra centrifuge in the lab of biology professor Julia Oxford. Hazeki-Taylor is teaching Irwin how to prepare samples for sequencing by mass spectrometry so she can take over the task later this fall when Hazeki-Taylor takes maternity leave.

The lab, crowded with instruments, computers and the low hum of conversation, is Irwin's sanctuary. She spends about 30 hours a week here running tests that are part of Oxford's research studies on collagen XI, a protein found in tendon, bone, cartilage and connective tissue.

For Irwin, the colleagues she works with and the work itself are intertwined. "These are the people you talk to about your life," she says. "They're so supportive."

6:15 P.M.

Irwin unwinds with a bike ride down the Greenbelt. Sometimes she stops along the way and pulls out her personal journal.

It's a nice respite from the hectic pace of her day.

Irwin likes to cook, but tonight she meets her mom, Linda Irwin, at a downtown Chinese restaurant.

10:20 P.M.

Irwin hangs out in the apartment with her roommate Amy Douglas. Irwin enjoys the conversation, but before long she's ready for bed. Her upcoming day will be a busy one; she'll work in

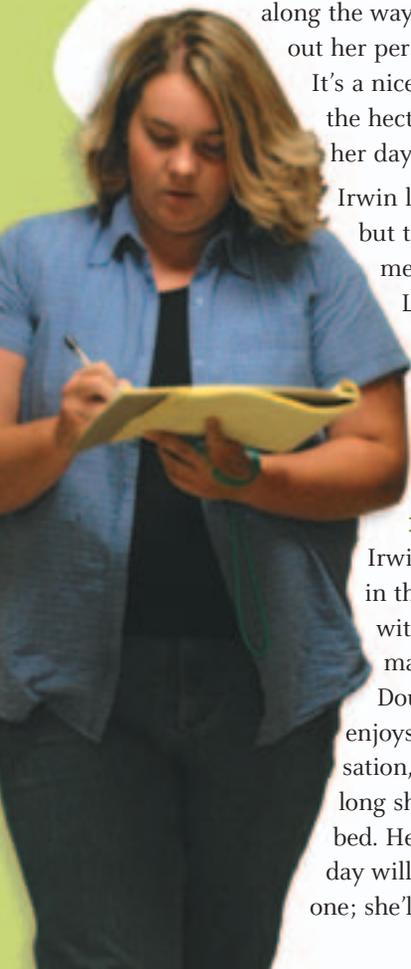


Above, Irwin checks the data as she runs tests in the lab of biology professor Julia Oxford. Irwin spends about 30 hours a week here. Oxford, who was recently named the inaugural recipient of the Dean's Distinguished Professor Award (page 29), has had a "major impact on my life," Irwin says. "Getting in to her lab was the best thing that ever happened to me." Left, Irwin checks her notes.

she'll work in Oxford's lab, teach the lab portion of an Introduction to Biology course, do some studying, and then head to her Biologist's Conundrum: Ethics, Work, & Global Context evening class.

Irwin looks back on the past four years, when her university life and her home life in Kuna were clearly separated, and knows that this year of living on campus will be very different.

"Living in Kuna, I was a little isolated," she says. "I feel like now I'm getting to express that part of myself that likes to get out and do lots of different things and be involved. I feel very fortunate to have gotten this scholarship and to be here at Boise State."



The Organizer

Name: A.J. McGillis

Year in School: Sophomore

Majors: Business and marketing

Resides: University Square Apartments

Quick Glance: Director of Student Programs Board

AJ. MCGILLIS KNEW that he didn't want the typical college experience. He was interested in more than just books and studying; he wanted to be a part of something. That's why in the spring he applied to be the director of Boise State's Student Programs Board (SPB).

The Student Programs Board does "a little bit of everything," McGillis says. SPB is the organizer of several big concerts on campus, including the Homecoming concert and the Spring Fling. SPB also puts on dozens of on-campus student-oriented events throughout the year – anything to help students feel more comfortable and connected to the campus community.

McGillis was raised in California, but Boise State seemed like a natural fit. His mom is "a Burley girl," and his dad went to Capital High School in Boise (you can find him in the hall of fame there). McGillis wanted the chance to be part of an expanding university.

"I like how it's growing, how they let students take part in



A.J. McGillis, left, and fellow student A.J. Newman show their true Boise State colors while preparing for a student-sponsored concert in Taco Bell Arena. McGillis calls his involvement in student affairs "an amazing learning experience."

growth – that was really attractive to me," McGillis says.

As the university grows, there's a greater challenge to provide better events for students. Part of his crash course in training this year has involved booking and organizing concerts, and although he describes concert planning as "frustrating and time-consuming," he's thinking about a career in the industry. McGillis says that he comes from a business-minded family (he's taking 12 credits this semester toward his double major in business and marketing), and the competitive aspects of the business intrigue him.

In the meantime, McGillis is trying to absorb as many lessons as he can from his time with SPB. "It's an amazing learning experience," he says.

— Julie Hahn

ttttt

The Student-Athlete

Name: Lee Marks

Year in School: Senior

Major: Psychology

Resides: Off-campus apartment

Quick Glance: Honorable mention All-WAC running back in 2004

AS A STANDOUT TAILBACK on the Boise State football team, Lee Marks believes every player on every team should work in unity toward a common goal.

However, it quickly becomes obvious that he is an individual apart from the collective.

The Reseda, Calif., native balances a tough academic load with the demands of playing Bronco football, which includes daily practices and meetings from 2-6 p.m. during the season. When his schedule allows, Marks also works the door at The Funny Bone Comedy Club in Boise.

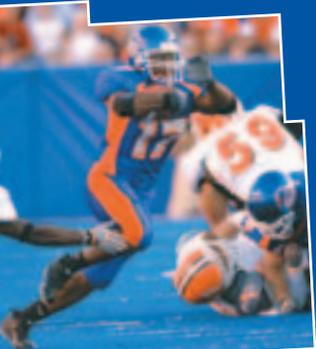
But where Marks, who led the Broncos in rushing last season, truly distinguishes himself is in the time he spends in the service of children. He commits himself to organizations such as the Make-A-Wish Foundation, and is involved in coaching youth athletics in the summer.

By working with children, Marks says he hopes to help them become better people. "If all that means is that I can help a child have just a little better day, that changes my whole world," he says.

Marks' involvement doesn't stop at the organizational level. Recently, at the Make-A-Wish Foundation's dinner in September, a parent whose child idolizes him approached Marks. Marks gave the parent his phone number and volunteered his time and money to take the child out to lunch. "I like to lead by example," he says.

Whether on or off the field, he does just that.

— Bill Schnupp



Top, Lee Marks discusses a point with a fellow student during one of his classes. Above, Marks in action on the blue turf during the football team's win over Bowling Green earlier this season.



The Newcomer

BY KATHLEEN CRAVEN

Name: Ryan Smith

Year in school: Freshman

Major: Pre-med

Resides: Towers Hall

Quick Glance: Smith is an 18-year-old from Ammon, in eastern Idaho. Although he spends summers working on his grandparents' farm in Montevieu, this is his first time living away from family. He chose Boise State because of its reputation and proximity to home, but a nearby resort where he could snowboard didn't hurt. He's on the Towers Residence Hall council and will soon start work as a desk assistant 10 hours per week.



8:30 A.M.

Ryan Smith reluctantly rolls out of bed, showers and pulls on a T-shirt and oversized shorts. Taking advantage of being on his own for the first time, Smith and his buddies "noshed" into the wee hours the previous night on food from their

favorite drive-through restaurant, Del Taco, making this morning a bit tough. Grabbing breakfast – a granola bar – from his mini-fridge, he heads to the Education Building for class.

9:15 A.M.

Smith greets a few classmates and settles in for University 101, an introduction to campus life. Today's activities begin with a quiz – summarize a story you read in this week's campus newspaper, *The Arbiter*. Smith reports on an interview with a porn star. Although he didn't actually read the story, he overheard someone talking about it and hopes he can slide. The rest of class is devoted to tips on how to get the most from textbook reading assignments.



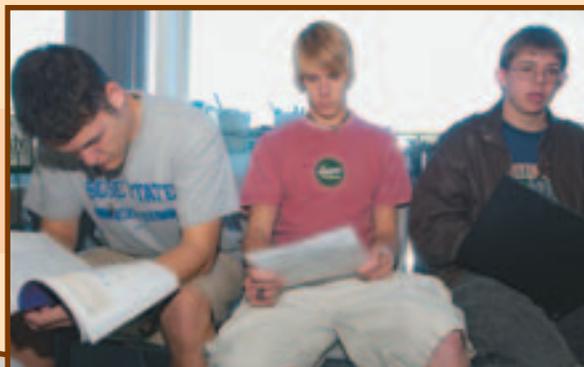
11 A.M.

Smith loads a few friends into his 1999 Oldsmobile Alero for a short trip to the Biomat USA plasma center. The plasma is used in the fabrication of life-saving medications. Smith donates twice a week to earn a few extra dollars.

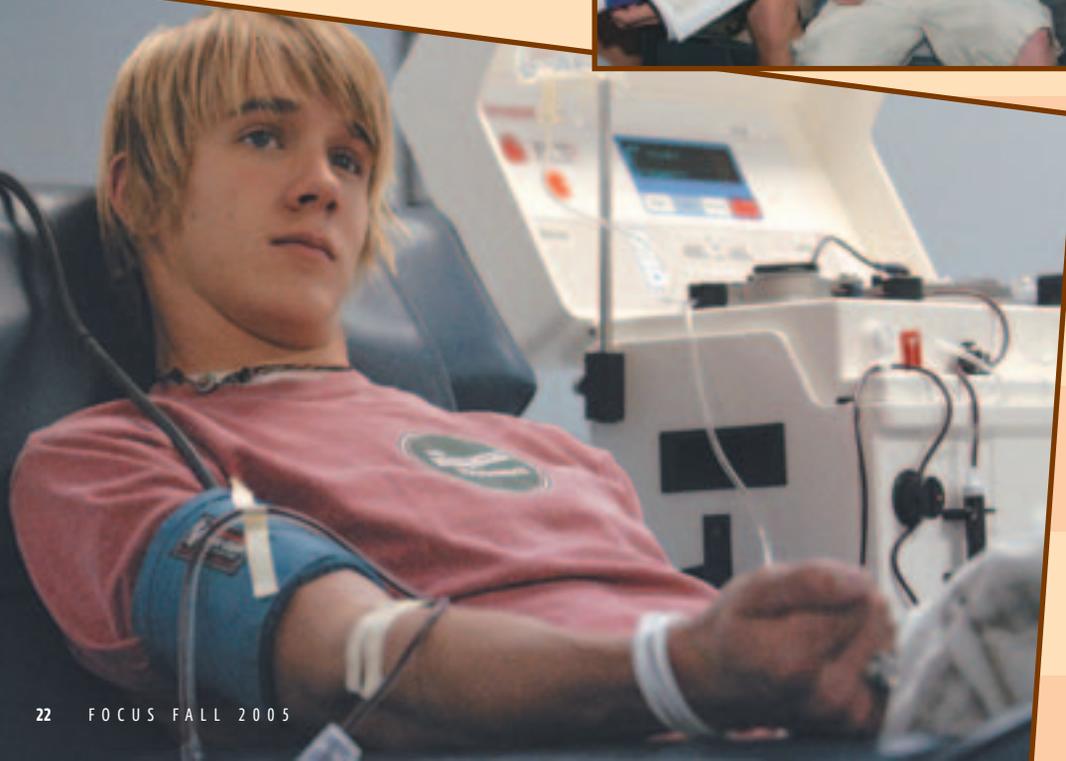
In addition to the \$25 he earns that day, the center offers a \$10 bonus for each new recruit; Smith has brought two. Money saved after expenses is earmarked for a longboard skateboard.

1 P.M.

Lunch is at the Subway in the Education Building. His other choice is the Table Rock Café in the Student Union, where he'll almost always opt for a chicken or grilled cheese sandwich. Smith bypasses the sodas in favor of healthier



A resident in Towers Hall, 18-year-old Ryan Smith exemplifies the traditional college freshman. Top, Smith takes notes in class. Left, for pocket money he makes regular trips to a Boise plasma donation center. Above, Smith waits to donate plasma with two fellow students. So far he's been able to keep up with the studies without too much problem. "I've learned that if you just go to class and do your homework, you'll be fine," he says.



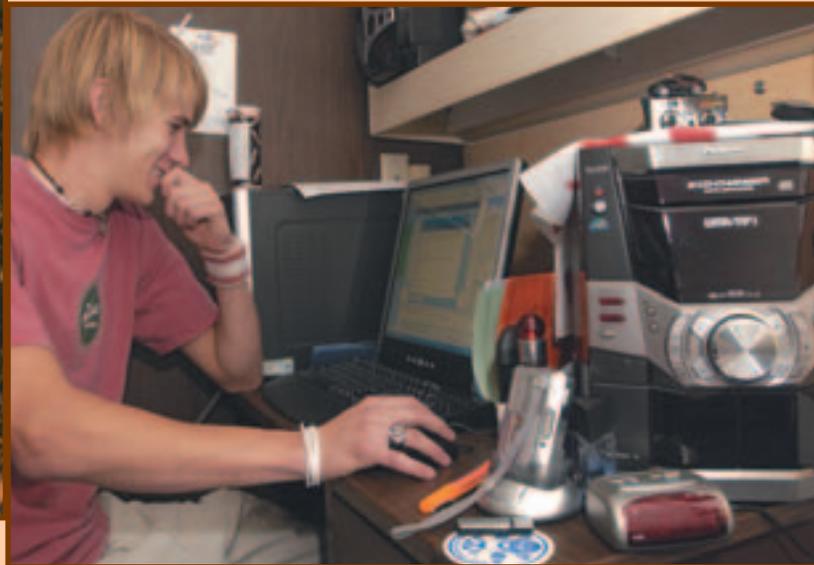


game, they toss a football around until it lands in a tree, requiring a climb to retrieve it.

5:30 P.M.

Following dinner, Smith prepares for Wednesday's classes – English and philosophy. Philosophy, taught by James Stockton, offers opportunities to examine his attitudes in a new light.

“My favorite quote from philosophy is, ‘Philosophy is not concerned with whether a king with a lot of money is happy. Rather, it’s concerned with what is kingship, and what is happiness?’ It makes you think.”



Left, Smith's busy day often includes a rousing game of ultimate Frisbee near Towers Hall with some of his classmates. But it isn't all fun and games as he checks over a math assignment, above, on his computer in his room.

drinks. “I stopped drinking soda,” he explains. “I decided to get in better shape.”

That means regular hours at the Student Recreation Center, rotating workouts on biceps, chest and legs. He’s also taking karate on Monday evenings.

2:30 P.M.

Smith heads back to his room in Towers Hall, which is littered with piles of clothing. “It’s getting really close to laundry day,” he says. His mini-fridge is piled with snack foods and bright posters cover the walls. At his sleek new computer he focuses on Math 108, intermediate algebra. The class meets once a week; practice and additional help are delivered via Web and lab instruction. This week’s lesson deals with inequalities and applications.

3:30 P.M.

Ready for a break, he rounds up some friends for a pick-up game of ultimate Frisbee. Sporting bright headbands, the group plays on the grassy hill outside the halls; for a more serious game they’ll head over to the intramural field behind the Student Union. When they tire of the

6:30 P.M.

Smith drives to the V.A. Medical Center in Boise for a service-learning orientation. Service-learning encourages students to explore the connection between what they’re learning in the classroom and its real-life applications. Smith’s assignment is to visit with the veterans in the hospital.

8 P.M.

“After 8 is usually a wild card,” Smith says. Some nights he listens to his four gigabytes of downloaded music, mostly reggae and punk, watches a movie or orders take-out food. Weekends might include a date. Mostly, he enjoys hanging with his friends.

“It’s funny,” he says. “Everyone told me how hard college would be before I got here, but I’ve learned that if you just go to class and do your homework, you’ll be fine.”

The Non-Traditional Student

BY SHERRY SQUIRES

Name: Janet George

Year in school: Senior

Major: Elementary education - endorsement in special education

Resides: Nampa, Idaho, with her family

Quick Glance: George is in her final year of education at Boise State pursuing her lifelong dream of teaching. She made the transition from homemaker to student four years ago, taking her first two years of classes in Nampa at the Canyon County Center where she felt more comfortable, and moved to the Boise campus in 2003.



4:30 A.M.

Janet George has much to attend to this morning before gathering her books, note taker and backpack for the commute from Nampa to Boise. While her teenage daughter Heidi sleeps, she showers and prepares to spend 30 minutes with Weeco, her 3-year-old seeing-eye dog. She'll groom her, feed her, play with her and let the yellow Labrador work off excess energy before the two of them start their day.

6:15 A.M.

George "drags" Heidi out of bed, helps get her day started, and heads for the bus stop.

7 A.M.

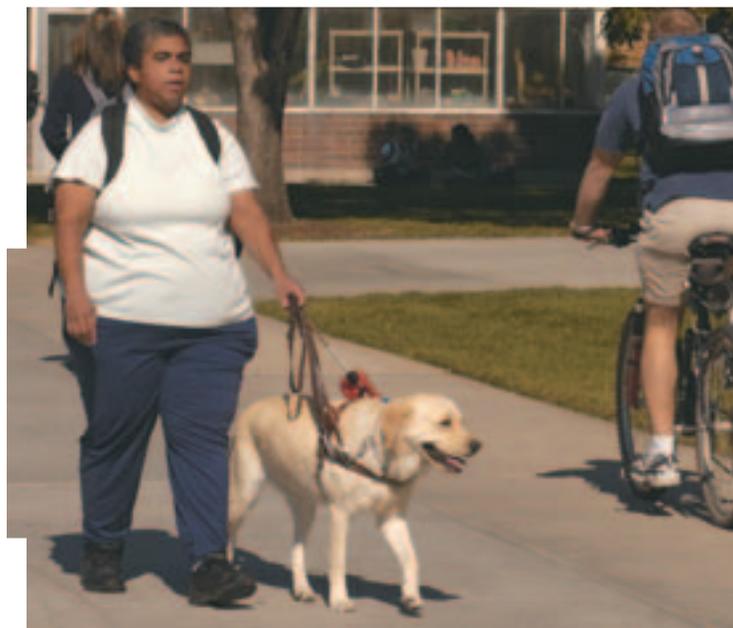
The bus drops George off at St. Luke's Meridian Medical Center where she waits for a cab to take her the rest of the way to Meridian's River Valley Elementary School. Some mornings a friend can work it into her schedule to give George a ride. But today George and Weeco ride the bus. When she made the decision to go back to school four years ago, George knew it would mean adapting to being alone after years of relying on her two daughters to drive her and accompany her places.

Today she will stand in front of a classroom of fifth-graders for the second time as a student teacher. Last week during her classroom management class, she tried to picture herself filling out necessary school paperwork, getting the children safely out of the building for a fire drill and helping them learn not to distract Weeco while she is on duty.

"I've wanted to do this my whole life, so here I am," she says.

7:30 A.M.

When George arrives at River Valley, she realizes that the





Nampa resident Janet George started student teaching fifth-graders this semester after dreaming of teaching since she was a child. Clockwise from lower left, George spends Mondays and Wednesdays in the classroom at River Valley Elementary School in Meridian. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, she relies on her seeing-eye dog, Weeco, to help her navigate the Boise State campus as she makes her way through her final year of coursework. Below, Weeco takes a break.

layout of the classroom has changed since last week, when she spent about 40 minutes learning her way around the school. She moves around the room, quickly committing desk locations and student seating assignments to memory.

9 A.M.

When she addresses the students in her rich Jamaican accent, her voice is strong and steady with no hint of nerves. She gets right to the point. She asks the students to call out their names as they raise their hands so she knows who is talking. She takes attendance, then lunch count. During math, the homeroom teacher whispers to George that some of the students are fidgeting with items in their desks rather than paying attention to the problems being worked out on the board.

"I can't see you playing with stuff," she announces. "But I am asking you to respect each other and me enough not

to play around. I'll be listening for it."

George is determined that her blindness won't get in her way. Her father was born with polio that physically crippled him and her mother was also blind. "My father said people are the better for having a disability," she says.

"You just have to cope with whatever disability you have and find methods to deal with it."

4 P.M.

George leaves the school and heads home. On the bus, Weeco curls up neatly at her feet and waits. As soon as the dog reaches home, her harness is removed and she runs circles around the back yard. George visits with Heidi about her day at Nampa High and encourages her to baby-sit for a friend to make some extra money.

She shares with her husband, Mike, a conversation she had with their oldest daughter, Michelle, 18 and a first-year graphic design student at Boise State. Her husband, also blind, is between jobs. He is often home before George and makes dinner for the family. "Sometimes it's dreadfully hard for a blind person to find work," she says.

Over dinner, mother, father and daughter talk about their plans to join with their congregation at church to help collect items for Hurricane Katrina victims and then plan a possible trip to walk the Boise Greenbelt this weekend, something they enjoy as a family but haven't done lately with everyone's busy schedules.

8 P.M.

George finishes a lesson plan that is due tomorrow and calls it a day. She'll spend the next day on the Boise campus. She remembers how intimidated she was when she was first learning to navigate between buildings for classes and find her way to and from the library and bus stops. "The campus sounds so busy," she says.

But she has built up great confidence. She has to because it's in the cards. "My dream is to someday teach visually impaired kids," she says. "The Lord had it all planned out."



The International Student

BY JULIE HAHN

Name: Saud Al-Madani

Year in school: Senior

Major: Respiratory therapy

Resides: Off-campus apartment

Quick Glance: Al-Madani is a visiting student from Saudi Arabia. He came to Boise in 2003 after the hospital he worked at in Riyadh offered to send him to the United States to train in respiratory therapy. Al-Madani will return to his home country next year. In the meantime he's taking classes using the Blackboard system, which allows students to do their studies online.



9:15 A.M.

Saud Al-Madani, 28, wakes up in his tidy apartment in a large complex close to the Boise State campus. It's an early start for Al-Madani, who is a habitual night owl. "I usually go to sleep around 2, 3, 4," he says. "So I sleep until about noon, around there."

There's no rush because Al-Madani is a Boise State student who doesn't have to report to class, just to his computer. He is working toward his degree in respiratory therapy



through an online curriculum, one of several international students who are in the same program.

10:30 A.M.

Although Al-Madani can take his classes anywhere, he gets out of the house and studies a lot at the Albertsons Library. He previously had to go to a classroom for his core classes, but his major studies now are online.

Al-Madani was working as an interpreter at a hospital in Riyadh, his hometown in Saudi Arabia, when he got the opportunity to come to Boise State on scholarship. The hospital he worked at was in need of respiratory therapists, so his bosses footed the bill. He arrived in 2003. "I could have taken the classes at home," he said, "but this is better."

11:30 A.M.

Al-Madani is a frequent visitor to the Student Union, where he fires up his laptop and enters the Blackboard program that lets him access his classes. The classes are interactive, and when he logs on dozens of names and e-mail address pop up in the "classroom." Many of those names are Arabic.

Al-Madani is part of a small but vibrant Saudi community at Boise State. Most of his countrymen here are getting degrees in engineering, paid for by a corporation back home.

1:30 P.M.

A Muslim, Al-Madani visits the Islamic Center every Friday for prayers. He greets several friends outside in Arabic before slipping



off his shoes and leaving them on the porch. Al-Madani rests on a rug on the floor and listens as the imam speaks for about 20 minutes about being humble and entering





heaven. After the speaker is done, Al-Madani says prayers with the group, bowing twice and prostrating twice.

Then he visits other worshippers outside after the service. Al-Madani has a car (license plate: "SAUD"), which makes him a hot commodity among his fellow students who need to return to classes at Boise State.

2:30 P.M.

Al-Madani sits down to lunch at his house. His family sends him spices from back home because some of his favorites aren't available here.

3:30 P.M.

Al-Madani unwinds at Java, a coffee shop downtown. Later, he'll catch up with some of his friends. The international students at Boise State are a tight-knit community, willing to help each other navigate the foreign education system. Al-Madani is a frequent visitor to the International Programs Office, and he's just as curious about other people's cultures as they are about his.

11 P.M.

Al-Madani has a late-night dinner. In October, he will observe Ramadan. He'll be required to fast from sunup to sundown every day for about a month. Everyone asks him if he gets up early to eat a huge breakfast, he says. (He doesn't.)

Saud Al-Madani is a respiratory therapy student from Saudi Arabia. Clockwise from far left, Al-Madani doesn't have to attend class; instead, he takes online classes from his apartment on his computer. A big part of Al-Madani's life in Boise is hanging out with his friends, including his fellow countrymen and other international students. Because Al-Madani's classroom is portable, he often takes his work to Java, one of his favorite downtown coffee shops. Al-Madani greets a friend before stepping into the Islamic Center of Boise for Friday prayer services.

2 A.M.

Al-Madani heads to bed. He will head back to Saudi Arabia next year, probably at the end of spring. His friends back home are getting married and starting families, and he wants to get to know all of the new babies' names. But he says that he will also remember his time in Boise.

"Coming to Boise was a good experience and I won't forget it," he says. "Getting exposed to a new culture is way different than hearing or reading about it. In Boise I made good friendships with some American faculty and students, and other international students, that I would love to keep. And I hope when I leave that I leave a good impression about myself and my country."

The Worker

Name: Elyse Panzella

Year in School: Sophomore

Major: Visual art

Resides: At home in Boise with her parents and two younger siblings

Quick Glance: Budding artist who paints, draws and does interior design

Right, long days that start with early-morning classes and end with late-night departures from campus are part of Elyse Panzella's regular routine. Left, Panzella shows off her school colors while working as a bank teller.



BOY, AM I TIRED," says Elyse Panzella as she catches a ride with a neighbor for her morning math class at Boise State. "I tried to go to bed at 11 last night, but didn't fall asleep until 1. That's pretty tough when you have to get up at 6."

Given her schedule, a full load at Boise State and three part-time jobs, the 20-year-old Boise resident's fatigue is understandable. On this morning, her life is further complicated by car problems. "I have a meeting for work tonight at 6:30, and it's at the Birds of Prey Center, which is really out of the way," she says. "I hope I can find a ride."

In this case "work" is her job as a teller for the Bank of America branch in West Boise. She works close to 30 hours a week Mondays, Wednesday, Fridays and Saturdays at the bank and a combined eight to 12 hours weekly for two retail outlets at Boise Towne Square.

Panzella's work schedule, together with the 16 credit hours she is taking at Boise State, doesn't leave much time for a social life these days. "Most days I leave the house around 7:30 a.m. and don't get home until somewhere between 7 and 11 p.m.," says the 2003 Capital High graduate. "With work, school and homework, sometimes I'll go two or three weeks without having a day off."

A standout student with a cheerful personality and a strong work ethic, Panzella has always maintained a busy pace. The current demands on her schedule are a bit unwieldy at times, but she says they aren't anything she can't handle. "One thing's for sure," she says. "I don't have to worry about how I spend my time."

ttttt

— Bob Evancho

The Soldier

Name: Nick Alex

Year in School: Junior

Major: German

Resides: Off-campus apartment

Quick Glance: Army ROTC scholarship student

FROM THE TIME HE WAS A KID, Nick Alex wanted to be a soldier like his dad, a Green Beret. By the time he reached high school, he knew he wanted to be an infantry officer.

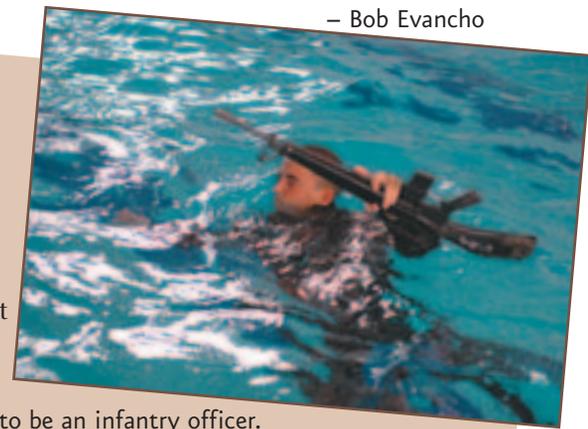
So it was no surprise when he enlisted in the Army National Guard right after graduating from Meridian's Centennial High School in 2003. After basic training, he enrolled at Boise State, where he was offered an ROTC scholarship. After he receives his commission as an officer in spring 2007, he's committed to eight years with the Army.

In addition to carrying 16-19 credits each semester, he's also attended two highly demanding summer training schools – U.S. Army Airborne School in Ft. Benning, Ga., and Mountain Warfare School at Camp Jericho in Vermont. "It was the most stressful two weeks of my life," he says of the latter. "I was pushed to my limits ... it's amazing what you can do when you are put in a situation like that and told what to do."

He also maintains a rigorous physical schedule. Each day starts at 6 a.m. with a military fitness class entailing timed and long-distance runs, and runs with 35-pound packs. Following that he hits the gym for weight training, attends class and studies. For fun he's treasurer of the Ranger Club, which focuses on paintball, whitewater rafting and other outdoor activities. Somehow he manages to maintain a 3.4 GPA and work at Costco.

"My whole goal in going to college is to commission," he says. "It's what I've known my whole life."

— Kathleen Craven



Above, ROTC cadet Nick Alex prepares to jump into the Boise State pool for combat water survival training. Right, Alex keeps his head, and weapon, above water during the training session.