

November 30, 2006

BOARD ENDORSES NEED BASED SCHOLARSHIP PLAN

POCATELLO - The State Board of Education unanimously endorsed the concept to help the neediest of Idaho students receive more financial aid to attend higher education. The Board will work with Governor-elect Otter and the Legislature to further develop details of the plan.

The scholarship program is part of the Board's strategic vision to improve access to higher education in Idaho. Idaho has one of highest high school graduation rates in the country, but one of the lowest attendance and completion rates in higher education. Research shows the best and fastest growing jobs will require education beyond high school. By increasing academic preparation and financial assistance, the Board hopes to improve the number of students continuing their education.

Currently, Idaho offers merit-based scholarships for high school graduates, the Promise Scholarship, but very little need based aid. Idaho offers roughly \$17 per student in need based aid compared to the national average of \$387. If the need based proposal passes the Legislature, more than 650 high school graduates could receive up to \$3,000 in state aid to further their education beginning in 2007.

"As the cost of living and the cost of tuition rises our students are in desperate need for additional aid," said Sue Thilo, chair of the taskforce that developed the recommendations. "No longer can students work part-time and go to school full-time without taking out large amounts of students loans. As we look at how to improve Idaho's economy and the lives of Idahoans, education is the key.'

The program, modeled after successful programs in states like Oregon and Oklahoma, would focus on student responsibility and an early commitment. The Board believes students have a stake in attaining their education. Starting in middle school, students would learn more about the value of higher education and commit to do their part to attend. In addition to early intervention, students must receive a 2.0 GPA in high school, commit to be drug free, apply for federal financial aid and maintain satisfactory academic standards in college. Students must also contribute financially to their education whether by earning academic or talent scholarships or by working.

The proposal was developed by financial aid directors from Idaho's colleges and universities, as well a students, parents, State Board members, legislators, business representatives, and public school administrators. While the Board unanimously approved the plan, it also directed staff to work with Legislators to refine the plan before introducing a final proposal. The initial funding request is \$10 million. The Board would also propose an endowment fund to which businesses and citizens could contribute.

The Board also approved the Center for Advanced Energy Studies (CAES). The 55,000 square foot CAES facility will open in June 2008 and is a collaborative effort between Boise State University, Idaho State

University, the University of Idaho and the Battelle Energy Alliance. The building will include conference rooms as well as faculty, researchers, graduate and undergraduate students in Idaho Falls. The project is expected to cost \$17 million.

In addition, the Board approved BSU's request for two new master's programs: master of nursing and a master of science in nursing program.