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## For Immediate Release

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## Higher Education is Critical to Idaho

By Debbie Critchfield, President, Idaho State Board of Education

Starting this week, our elected senators and representatives serving in the Legislature, will begin debating the budget for higher education in Idaho.

Governor Little is calling for a 2.6 percent budget increase for our four-year institutions next fiscal year.

As president of the State Board of Education, I call attention to the importance of the budget decisions as an overall investment in Idaho.

There are 111,000 living graduates from the University of Idaho; ***nearly 47,500 Vandals live in Idaho.***

Boise State University has 98,000 living graduates; ***over 65,300 Broncos live in Idaho.***

Idaho State University has nearly 79,000 living graduates; ***more than 47,600 Bengals live in Idaho.***

Lewis-Clark State College has nearly 19,000 living graduates on file; ***over 11,400 Warriors reside in Idaho.***

Our four public community colleges are training and educating thousands of people who are earning career technical certificates and academic degrees and like their counterparts graduating from our public four-year institutions, they are making a difference in Idaho every single day.

These are the engineers, the nurses and doctors, the welders, the teachers the accountants, small business owners, farmers, ranchers, technical workers and elected officials - who are involved and driving every aspect of Idaho's economy.

Highly trained graduates are using science to help Idaho farmers grow the world's best potatoes. They are also the skilled workforce spearheading innovation at our high-tech firms, and they build and maintain heavy equipment for industries like mining, forestry and farming.

A 2015 study found that our college and university alumni contribute more than **\$3 billion annually in gross state product**, a figure that has undoubtedly grown over the six subsequent years.

As the regents and trustees of our four-year college and universities, the State Board of Education is raising awareness about how important these institutions and community colleges are to our people, our state, and our collective future.

Citizens from all corners of Idaho and social-economic backgrounds have brighter futures because they are continuing their education beyond high school.

Like any business, our colleges and universities are eyeing the future, eliminating undersubscribed programs while partnering with business and industry to offer new opportunities and career pathways benefiting students and employers.

Idaho's statewide cybersecurity initiative is a good example of this. All eight public institutions are involved, expanding program capacity and training for students throughout our state to meet a growing demand for cybersecurity expertise from Idaho employers.

These are the jobs of the future. Idaho is competing with other states for employers who will provide these jobs. A vibrant system of public higher education is essential to provide the needed skills and education so that our people can succeed, and our state can prosper.

Tens of thousands of our fellow citizens have improved their lives and the lives of their families because of the education and training they received at one of our colleges or universities.

Our institutions are investments that have proven their worth to our state and to generations of Idahoans throughout our history, even before statehood. The numbers bear that out and the investments must continue.

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