



Rep. Barbara Ehardt  
Idaho House of Representatives  
P.O. Box 83720  
Boise, ID 83720

July 9, 2019

Dr. Marlene Tromp, President  
Boise State University  
1910 University Drive,  
Boise, Idaho 83725

Dear President Tromp:

I recently read a newsletter sent on June 4th, 2019, by BSU Interim President Martin Schimpf concerning Boise State's latest diversity, equality, and inclusion initiatives. Though I know this letter was not sent by you personally, it was disconcerting for many reasons, primarily because Boise State University is an Idaho school and as such should reflect Idaho values. I have serious concerns regarding Schimpf's approach. Moving forward, I ask that you consider a different path.

Rather than championing academic excellence, Schimpf's letter stated, "It is clear to me that students, faculty, and staff understand the importance of Boise State being a leader on inclusive excellence—not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it is vital to maintaining our ability to serve our students in the future."

This drive to create a diversified and inclusive culture becomes divisive and exclusionary because it separates and segregates students. These initiatives by nature highlight differences and suggest that certain groups are treated unequally now—and that BSU should redress these grievances. As Governor Brad Little has stated on numerous occasions: We need to do things the "Idaho way!" This means Idaho's universities should always seek to treat all students fairly and equitably.

The following are some initiatives and goals mentioned that are antithetical to the Idaho way:

- Support for multicultural student events including Pow Wow, Rainbow Graduation, Black Graduation, Project Dream, etc. instead of helping all students;
- Six graduate fellowships for "underrepresented minority students" instead of merit-based awards;

- A gender-based violence community-coordinated response team, instead of letting the police handle the matter;
- A gender-based equity center proposal for funding to provide LGBTQIA+ focused sexual misconduct prevention and response programming;
- A system that spends valuable time assessing the proper use of names and pronouns versus educational pursuits that lead to a career;
- Revisions to the university's search committee training curriculum to include a section on identifying and addressing implicit bias in hiring decisions;
- A graduate school preparation course only for underrepresented students rather than all students.

A further concern of mine is that despite the many goals Schimpf outlined, none address making tuition more affordable so our Idaho kids can afford to actually attend Boise State, an Idaho school. Unfortunately, not one of these initiatives will help our Idaho students achieve their dreams of obtaining a degree and a career without an undue debt burden.

Tuition at Idaho universities is increasing at an alarming rate. Boise State is no exception, as its undergraduate tuition is slated to increase 4.9 percent for the upcoming year and has increased nearly 14 percent over the last three years (Fall 2016 to Fall 2019).

This past session, the Legislature increased appropriation for all Idaho colleges and universities by more than \$24 million, an increase of 4.8 percent. The legislative intent with this continuing appropriation has been, in large part, to help defray the costs of tuition.

As legislators, our constituents always ask us about the rapidly increasing cost of college tuition. They rightly note that tuition hikes put degrees out of reach for the average Idaho student. The cost of college is a factor in some students dropping out. Yet instead of looking to assist our students, Boise State is adding unnecessary costs.

The following are some of the listed programs that will drive up costs for Idaho students:

- Targeting DACA students to apply for Idaho's Opportunity Scholarships, even though the state turned down 1,780 Idaho applicants in 2018;
- Six graduate fellowships for underrepresented minority students, which are awarded to faculty who successfully recruit these students;
- A new position in Student Affairs to support first-generation students of color;
- A new American Indian liaison position in Student Affairs;
- A new staffer in the provost's office dedicated to diversity and inclusion;
- A new parents' academy in the State Board of Education;
- \$25,000 to be allocated to departments to expand their searches through additional media advertising to attract a more diverse pool of candidates;
- \$30,000 from Student Affairs to support multicultural student events, including Pow Wow, Rainbow Graduation, Black Graduation, Project Dream;
- A program that forces Boise State students to financially support the food pantry, housing, emergency loans to students, and more—even as they struggle to pay for their own tuition!

Besides the aforementioned programs which contribute to ever-increasing costs, the overriding theme of these initiatives is antithetical to the purpose of a public university in Idaho.

Like many of my colleagues, I believe in higher education. However, I don't view the current direction of Boise State to be in the tradition of what higher education has been, or should be, in Idaho. As legislators, we will seek and support academic excellence that does not pursue social or political agendas or incur additional costs. We really do believe in doing things '*the Idaho way*' and we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

***Barbara Dee Ehardt***

Rep. Barbara Dee Ehardt  
District 33

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