

## Senate Bill S 1291 - Adult Degree Completion Scholarship

- Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee.
- I am Vicki Budd, Director of the Multidisciplinary Studies (MDS) degree at Boise State University. I am here in support of the Governor's proposed \$5 million Adult Degree Completion Scholarship.
- I have been working with adult students for over twenty-three years, the past eight years in Idaho. I've always had a passion for working with adult students and know the intense commitment it requires for them to successfully complete while balance many other life responsibilities. For many adult students degree completion is a "bucket list" item they wish to check off.
- When I received my undergraduate and graduate degrees many moons ago I was fortunate to be able to go full time and only have a part time job. That is not the case for adult students today. College is one aspect of their full life. Most have full time jobs, are parents and volunteer in the community among other things. Financial need is one of many challenges they have.
- With me today is Jon Schneider, Director of the Bachelor of Applied Science degree and
- Ms. Rebecca Morgan, our Intake and Outreach Coordinator for both programs and also a graduate of the MDS program. She – and other students – are in the audience and willing to give testimony later. For now I will introduce them:
  - Jon Schneider, Director of the Bachelor of Applied Science degree.
  - Rebecca Morgan, Intake and Outreach Coordinator for the BAS and MDS degrees
  - And some of our stellar students
- I've distributed to you information about both of these degrees along with some info cards of some of our recent graduates. It will give you an idea of our student population.
- The MDS degree at Boise State is one small sample of the need for adult student scholarships. There are many adults students in Idaho with some college and no degree. Life got in the way and they had to stop. Now they are in a position of wanting or in most cases **needing** to complete a degree to better their lives and the lives of their family.
- Adult students tend to be more settled than the traditional student. They are more likely to stay in Idaho when they complete their degree and contribute to the economic development of our State.
- In order to give you a snap shot of an Idaho adult student I will provide some statistics on the adult students in **our** degree.
- The MDS degree targets adult students with 58 or more credits
- They must have at least a five year gap in their education.
- Average age is 41
- Average time to completion is 23 months
- The degree is available completely online. We have students in many rural areas of Idaho pursuing the degree. The online option, coupled with financial assistance, makes degree completion possible.
- We have an 87% completion rate – with the right support and financial assistance adult students **WILL** finish.
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- Time and money are the biggest factors for adult students returning to school.
- One of the top reasons students tell us they cannot return or why they don't persist to graduation is because they cannot afford it.
- When I completed my bachelor's degree back in the day I had one \$1,200 loan. The graduation gift from my parents was they paid off my \$1,200 loan. They knew how difficult it is to complete a degree and then immediately be burdened with debt. Adult students these days have much more debt than \$1,200 as you will hear about in the testimonies of some of the students today. That makes it difficult for them to determine if they can manage the debt while also supporting their family. We all know the cost of higher education is not cheap. As Ms. Stoll mentioned yesterday in her presentation to you, the estimated cost for one year of college at a public institution is nearly \$19,000...I would say that is a bit more than the \$1,200 I had.
- Fifty-nine percent of our students attend part time. The majority are balancing school with a full-time job.
- The need for part time scholarships is important. Scholarships for this population are very limited, especially since many scholarships require full-time attendance.
- We find in our program it is the ability for students to attend part time that **allows** them to successfully **persist** to graduation. The average time to completion is 23 months.
- Recent analysis of the impact of scholarships on this population shows that scholarship recipients are retained at a rate of 94%. Scholarships work!
- Having the financial assistance makes it more doable for many students who are also supporting a family.
- Adult Degree Completion Scholarships will benefit more than just bachelor's degree seeking students.
- We work closely with two-year Idaho schools to encourage students to go on after their associate's degree.
- Having the ability to come out of their two-year degree with little or no debt would create *momentum* for them to persist towards a bachelor's or a master's degree. They may need to take out loans for an additional degree but they would not already have a debt load burdening them when they consider another degree.
- Adult Degree Completion Scholarships will significantly impact the State Board's ambitious goal that 60% of Idahoans will have a degree or certificate by 2020.
- These scholarships will help address the needs indicated on the State Board of Education's web site:
- They will help Idaho grow and retain talent within the state to fuel innovation and economic competitiveness
- They will help improve the quality of life for Idahoans and drive a vibrant, diverse economy
- These scholarships will help the State be responsive to businesses that will employ the future workforce
- Today we ask for your support for the Adult Degree Completion Scholarships. Like the Idaho Opportunity Scholarship experienced their first year, I believe the State will have **many** applicants when this scholarship is approved.