The Case for Supporting the

Basque Studies Consortium

at Boise State University
A Defining Legacy

Idaho’s Basque community is a defining element of our state’s legacy.

Since their first appearance in the state as shepherders, farmers, ranchers and small business owners during the early 1880s, Idaho’s Basques have embraced and celebrated their vibrant and dynamic cultural heritage, displaying and sharing the beauty of being Basque to the benefit of generations of Idahoans from all cultural backgrounds. Through their pride, passion and diligence, this welcoming and tightly-knit community has ensured that Basque sheep wagons, the Oinkari Dancers and the celebration of Jaialdi are inextricably linked with Idaho and its sense of self.

Just a few minutes walk from downtown Boise’s Basque Block – one of the most important centers of Basque culture in the world – Boise State is uniquely positioned to play a key role in the continuing development of the Basque diaspora’s rich identity in the U.S., the American West and Idaho. Through its Basque Studies Consortium Boise State provides an academic platform for the merging of local, regional, national and international Basque Studies efforts – and does so in the midst of one the largest and most vibrant Basque communities outside of the Old World homeland.

Boise State offers the state’s only degree program in Basque Studies. The university’s Basque-related curriculum dates back to the early 1970s and remains closely tied to the program’s deep local, national and international connections. Today, the Basque Studies Consortium is committed to the belief that language and culture provide identity and context essential to one’s worldview. Through its programming, the Basque Studies Consortium steeps hundreds of students and community members in the richness of Basque heritage each year. Many of those touched by the program come from a non-Basque cultural background, further perpetuating and deepening the entire community’s Basque connections – even as third- and fourth-generation U.S.-born Basques begin defining their own relationship with their heritage very differently than their parents and grandparents may have.

By helping to preserve and build Idaho’s strong Basque identity, Boise State and the Basque Studies Consortium not only helps to preserve a defining part of Idaho’s heritage, but also strengthens the very heart of the community we all share.
Through its “Learning Links” philosophy, the consortium develops and maintains a network of volunteers, community members and champions to expand knowledge of and access to Basque learning opportunities. With the full support of Boise State, the program identifies and utilizes the skills of local and international experts to encourage intergenerational learning, while expanding knowledge of Basque history, culture and language.

While Basque programs and organizations throughout the region continue to grow and thrive, critical connective elements must be maintained and expanded to ensure that collectively, these groups have the tools needed to reach their highest potential. Boise State is poised and committed to provide the infrastructure to solidify these connections – the learning links. In addition, an essential element of the program’s ongoing network building includes outreach and connections to non-Basque individuals and organizations. Only by building awareness and affinity for our Basque heritage in the larger community can the effort's success thrive.

Originally founded in 2005 with funding provided by the Basque government, the U.S. Department of Education and the Cenarrusa Foundation, the Basque Studies Consortium has built a wide variety of relationships with local, national and international Basque organizations since its formation.

Locally, the program enjoys a complementary educational collaboration with the Boise Basque Museum and Cultural Center. In addition to regular faculty presentations to community groups at the museum, Basque Studies also contributed to the museum’s six-part exhibition “Hidden in Plain Sight: The Basques” which focuses on the journey that hundreds of thousands of Basque immigrants made to the United States in the early 20th century. The exhibition was displayed at the Ellis Island National Monument for three months in 2010 and continues to be displayed across the state. The program also works closely with the museum to research and catalog Basque arborglyphs – remote tree carvings made by shepherds – in the region, is closely aligned with the beloved Oinkari Dancers and is involved in a collaborative effort with the Jaialdi International Basque Culture Festival, which is held every five years and will return to Boise in 2015.

The Basque Studies Consortium encourages intergenerational learning while expanding knowledge of Basque history, culture and language.
Nationally, the Basque Studies Consortium maintains collaborative and complementary ties to the Basque Studies Center at the University of Nevada, Reno, which for several decades has succeeded in creating a first-rate research institute complimented by an extensive library collection. The program also is a member of the North American Basque Organizations, a federation of over forty Basque and Canadian entities. The consortium’s director serves as the volunteer educational coordinator for this national organization, assisting its members in promoting educational events.

The Basque Studies Consortium also maintains a variety of international connections through its online journal--BOGA, which features Basque scholars and archives, and showcases international scholarly resources. Other international connections include the program’s participation in the University Studies Abroad Consortium, as well as hosting visiting international professors and speakers, and taking part in international conferences.

Moving forward, the Basque Studies Consortium will build on these relationships in ways that will benefit the entire Basque diaspora. Through the deepening of its academic offerings, providing more opportunities for students and communities to engage in Basque studies, coordinating research efforts and building lasting connections between the various Basque organizations and communities throughout the U.S., Boise State and the Basque Studies Consortium can deepen their commitment to the study, preservation and dissemination of knowledge about Basque heritage and culture.

**Our Needs**

The Basque Studies Consortium seeks private philanthropic support for a $3 million endowment that will ensure the preservation and expansion of its community-focused international academic programming in perpetuity.

The primary priority for funding provided by the endowment is the creation of a directorship for the Basque Studies Consortium, the occupant of which will also serve as a visiting professor in Basque Studies. Under the leadership of this director, the consortium’s established relationships with local groups, national partners and overseas scholars will flourish – and the position’s visiting status ensures a continuous infusion of fresh ideas into the program.

In addition to funding the salary of the director/visiting professor, the endowment will also fund scholarships for students studying in the program’s Basque Studies minor, allowing greater numbers of students to internationalize their education. With nearly three-quarters of Boise State students relying on some form of financial aid to pay for school, funding for student scholarships is Boise State’s greatest need and top philanthropic priority. By funding these scholarships, donors to the endowment will ensure that a Boise State education remains affordable and accessible to Basque studies students, no matter their background.

The endowment’s resources will also be used to fund expanded activities that will enrich the program’s academic and community offerings, including possible new course offerings, expanded publication of academic journals, sponsorship of international academic conferences, funding international travel by students, hosting visiting speakers, and initiating new research collaborations.
Giving Opportunities

Donors have the following opportunities for philanthropic giving to the Basque Studies Consortium at Boise State endowment:

- **Consortium Directorship** - $2 million to support salary of director/visiting professor.

- **20 Named Endowed Scholarships** - $500,000 (25,000 minimum commitment for each, payable over 5 years).

- **Basque Studies Program Enrichment** - $500,000 to expanded activities that will enrich the program’s academic and community offerings.

For information about these or other giving opportunities, please contact:

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