



Blue Sky Institute Executive Summary - As of December 2016

Boise State University's Blue Sky Institute (BSI), much like the blue sky, represents a "clean slate" with an almost infinite potential for change. By creating this institute, we now have the opportunity to unleash unlimited collaborative potential to improve the human condition. There are many challenges confronting our region, state, country and world that will require large-scale, collaborative efforts in order to be managed, if not solved. Given the talent pool that exists at Boise State University and in our wider campus and business communities, we believe this new institute will enable us to play a major role in tackling many of these challenges. BSI is a cross-disciplinary effort of the College of Business and Economics (COBE) and the College of Health Sciences (COHS), and provides the foundation for a university-wide collaboration around our most entrenched global challenges.

BSI is initially focused on questions having to do with public health and healthcare by serving as a forum for the development, implementation, and validation of novel strategies that will improve public health and healthcare delivery within our campus community, as well as in the Treasure Valley and across Idaho. Actualizing major changes with respect to health-related behaviors and healthcare delivery invariably present immense financial, social, and political challenges. This is certainly the case as current delivery models based on a "fee for service" are not sustainable. The industry now finds itself moving towards a financial system based on prevention with payment based on quality of care delivered. The later model has come to be known as "population health" and the incentives to keep patients out of the healthcare system and healthy are the foundation of the system. As stated above, these types of changes represent a complete cultural shift on the part of the health providers, health payers and the patients. Given the inevitable differences that arise in these transitions, providing a "space" for discussion and consensus building is essential to move forward. BSI provides a nonpartisan space where stakeholders, who in some cases may have conflicting interests, can gather to discuss and seek solutions to common problems.

Providing sufficient mental health services is one component of population health that has reached a crisis level in our region and across the state. Problems include creating alternatives to providing care for acute behavioral health problems at traditional hospital emergency departments—a situation that costs more than \$2000/hour and creates “downstream” issues within those units. Early detection and intervention are huge challenges in the rural parts of our state and again, solutions represent a significant challenge. As such, improving mental health outcomes requires intentional collaboration between stakeholders, including health providers, health payers, local or state governments, business leaders, university researchers and others who are committed to implementation of viable new models.

Focusing on mental health as the first major area of collaboration, the Institute is actively working to:

- scope and define a specific population within population health on which to focus first, in this case mental health;
- map existing mental health efforts with the Treasure Valley, including a wide stakeholder group of hospitals, payers, individual providers, law enforcement and nonprofits;
- identify proven models and approaches around mental health from other cities and states;
- create a cross-sector, cross-disciplinary task force of leading practitioners and researchers to review the mapping and models in light of the collective aspiration to improve mental health outcomes;
- challenge the task force to create a community-relevant, innovative and phased master plan to address a continuum of care for mental health in the region by leveraging collaborative problem solving and joint accountability;
- steward the acquisition of necessary expertise and resources related to the mental health master plan not currently present in the Treasure Valley; and
- fund additive Treasure Valley and Boise State proposals to scale innovative or proven preventive mental health programs or to pilot new interventions that may achieve intended outcomes.

BSI’s mental health focus has two parallel and complimentary tracks. One is focused on our campus community and the other is focused on issues of mental health the Treasure Valley and across Idaho. Additionally, the BSI is constantly scanning the horizon for other opportunities to address entrenched social issues in our community that might intersect with our mental health work. For example, our research indicates that risk factors for many types of mental health issues include drug use and abuse, geographic isolation for those living in rural parts of our state, and a lack of preventative/early detention services. Organic growth is the expected forward path for the institute.

COHS and COBE have both committed to ongoing support for the BSI, including two half-time directors to lead the institute’s strategic work. A research assistant also supports the institute’s work, with specific focus on the community mental health projects. In addition, administrative support is shared between the two colleges.

Campus Strategies

The institute is exploring the intersection between business and health, with efforts to investigate the conversations, skills and potential programs that sit in that nexus. One of the first efforts of the new year will be a needs assessment conducted with the input of COHS and COBE faculty and members of the healthcare community in the Treasure Valley.

Additionally, the institute invited Zelda Geyer-Silvia, the former CEO of Blue Cross of Idaho, to serve as the first jointly appointed Executive in Residence at Boise State University. Specifically, Zelda will collaborate with the institute to explore the intersection of business/ management/ leadership and health and to identify new opportunities to serve and prepare campus and community stakeholders to meet evolving healthcare needs. Projects could include internal and external program and curriculum development, research projects and other collaborations to develop new efforts to grow student, faculty and community skills such as a capitated health services programming at Boise State.

Further, while not formally a part of the institute, BroncoFit continues to be a strong partner. BroncoFit's aspiration to transform Boise State University into the healthiest campus in America offers the opportunity for BSI to fund projects and experiments that inform our wider population health agenda. In particular, Spring 2017 will see an increased focus on mental health on campus and a mapping of resources available to support students, faculty and staff.

Finally, BSI is the on-campus home for the Hult Prize @ Boise State, a student competition that calls for cross disciplinary approaches to addressing complex social, economic and environmental ideas in a way that is sustainable over time. The intersection with the institute's mission is clear and support for the Hult Prize also provides a strong connections directly to Boise State students. This year's challenge was to build a social enterprise to reduce the human cost of involuntary migration. Student teams from across the campus and representing a wide disciplinary perspective participated in the pitch competition on November 10, 2016. The Hult Prize recently announced that a team from Boise State University has advanced to the competition's regional finals in Dubai, where they will have a chance to win \$1 million in seed capital to pilot their winning idea.

Community Strategies

Through the institute, Boise State University is acting as a facilitator and honest broker for the diverse stakeholders impacted by mental health in the Treasure Valley, and is serving as an incubator of new ideas and solutions alongside partners in government, business and civil society. The institute is also providing a nonpartisan space where stakeholders, who in some cases may have conflicting interests, can gather to discuss seeking solutions to common problems.

The first effort is a collaboration between St. Luke's and Saint Alphonsus Medical Systems so as to better understand the mental health crisis in the Treasure Valley with a specific emphasis on the impact mental health has on Ada County emergency departments and hospitals. The project goals include understanding this problem by leveraging quantitative and qualitative data from across the systems, assessing potential collaborative strategies and models to address problem(s) identified and presenting these findings to senior leaders in both organizations to determine whether a collaborative solution is possible.

Additionally, work on the mental health crisis project uncovered the need for a state-wide strategy for mental health. This project will begin in 2017 and will be led, at least initially, by collaboration between BSI and St. Luke's, Saint Alphonsus, the Department of Health and Welfare and Blue Cross of Idaho. In addition to mapping resources and barriers across the state for prevention, triage and treatment of mental health challenges, this task force will identify the resources needed to facilitate strategy development and the additional stakeholders needed to undertake the work.