

CARRIE QUINNEY PHOTO



Business professor Rob Anson coaches students who work directly with Idaho business clients.

## ANSON: CONSULTANT APPROACH ENCOURAGES STUDENT INNOVATION

Textbooks and coursework can teach budding programmers to write code. But they won't teach them how to work through detailed negotiations with clients, how to recognize nuanced differences between projects, or a whole host of other skills that will help them succeed in the workplace.

Boise State business professor Rob Anson uses an innovative approach to bridge the gap.

"There are things that just don't come from a book and knowledge that is difficult to impart in a full classroom," he said. "If I can model processes and behaviors for my students, they can learn so much more."

As a doctoral student, Anson first learned about "cognitive apprenticeship," the theory that people best learn to think by observing others more skilled than themselves think and act out loud through a situation. He's been using it ever since.

In his capstone class for information technology majors, Anson acts as consultant for teams of students who do everything from system development to cost benefit analysis for real clients. He believes in the mentoring concept so strongly that he and his wife moved into the business residential college for a year where they could interact with students outside of class. He also advises and supervises students.

When Vincent Lukasavich returned to school for a second degree, Anson helped him understand the information technology field and what types of jobs it might help him attain. Now a senior, Lukasavich works under Anson as a peer adviser to other students.

"Dr. Anson has a wealth of knowledge in the field and I've often sought his advice," Lukasavich said. "His demeanor and personality are really open, and he takes a genuine interest in students."

The relationships he's built with students are equally rewarding for Anson. "Most faculty crave seeing that spark, that moment when the student grasps something. It's why we are drawn to teaching in the first place," he said. "When you work with a student one-on-one, you see it." — **Sherry Squires** ◆



## Mentorship plays a vital role in university's research success

One of the most rewarding parts of publishing a university research magazine is the opportunity it provides to showcase the excellent work of our faculty and students. This issue of *Explore* literally explores the world, with articles that highlight Boise State research pursuits in locations ranging from the Arctic to Africa, as well as here in the Treasure Valley and throughout Idaho.

These diverse projects provide many benefits to our state and region, not all of which are quantifiable. In some cases, there are no dollar amounts or hard statistics to determine what benefit our students ultimately derive from working alongside faculty on funded research projects. But the benefits are substantial, and many of the articles in this issue of *Explore* underscore that fact.

Mentorship – the process by which a more experienced person helps a less experienced person – is a theme that runs through this issue of our magazine. It is overtly explored in "Team Players," the article preceding this column that focuses on several of our outstanding research groups. But mentorship also is an underlying theme in a number of other articles, as students discuss how hands-on research under the guidance of faculty enhances their education and prepares them for future careers, school teachers describe how our faculty are helping them develop new classroom skills, and new faculty relate the benefits of working with established faculty researchers.

The research culture of our university is grounded in collaboration, as the stories in this issue of *Explore* attest. It's exciting, and gratifying, to see the creative ways our faculty and students are driving this dynamic forward. As our university continues along the path of research excellence, our commitment to mentorship will help guide the way.

— MARK RUDIN, VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH