

An introduction to University Partnerships

By Michelle Thiel Bingham, Manager

Meeting today's workforce needs is something every organization must concern itself with. At Idaho National Laboratory, this requires ongoing collaboration with university partners, strategic planning and recruitment – from summer interns to postdoctoral researchers.

Making sure future workforce needs are met is an even greater challenge. At INL, taking the long-term view means understanding which areas will be hardest hit as 30 percent of our employees approach retirement, providing interns and others the opportunity to attain hands-on lab experience, broadening our perspectives by bringing in distinguished academics and researchers, encouraging workforce development in the community and helping the lab's existing workforce attain more education.

This all-of-the-above approach is what makes University Partnerships so unique.

Ours is a multi-faceted directorate that accomplishes many things for INL, its employees, the lab's university partners, the state and nation:

- * University Partnerships helps INL employees further their education through a program that pays most tuition and fees for classes from accredited universities. Because of our long-standing relationship with Idaho State University and University of Idaho, University Place came into existence and benefits our family members and neighbors.
- * University Partnerships helps develop the energy workforce of the future by identifying talent pipeline needs and working with technical colleges and universities to develop and implement new programs to meet those needs.
- * University Partnerships helps develop the energy workforce of the future through a robust intern program and by supporting technical colleges, universities and graduate programs.
- * University Partnerships links the brightest minds from academia and the lab through a Joint Appointment Program. This exchange of talent elevates everybody's game by encouraging innovation and fostering an entrepreneurial spirit.
- * University Partnerships provides opportunities for postdoctoral candidates to gain real-world laboratory experience prior to entering the workforce.
- * University partnerships promotes an interactive learning culture through an exchange program between INL and outside researchers, from the United States and abroad.

*University Partnerships encourages diversity by bringing into the lab setting foreign researchers and students.

We know what is coming. Thousands of INL employees – in vital areas such as chemistry, nuclear, mechanical and electrical engineering, computer science, biology and geology – are at least 50 years of age and approaching retirement. We also know that the lab needs the skilled workers of the future, technicians to run equipment and mechanics with the knowledge and ability to maintain and repair.

INL is growing, in business volume and the number of employees who will be needed to complete the remarkable diversity of work done here: combating climate change; securing critical infrastructure; combating nuclear nonproliferation; leading the world in cybersecurity innovation and electric vehicle research; even helping NASA explore Pluto and Mars.

INL has the need and desire to build a talent pipeline that will help us accomplish those tasks that make our world safer, cleaner and more prosperous today and tomorrow.

University Partnerships, through its collaborative efforts, programs and agreements, plays an important role in making that happen.

For more information about what we do, please visit www.inl.gov