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Idaho STEM Action Center reports progress to JFAC Jan. 29

BOISE, Idaho (Jan. 27, 2016) — The Idaho STEM Action Center will outline its research, initiatives and progress on Friday, January 29, before the Legislature’s Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee.

Housed in the office of Gov. C.L. “Butch” Otter, the Idaho STEM Action Center was approved during the 2015 legislative session to help produce a competitive workforce by implementing kindergarten-to-career science, technology, engineering, and math education programs aligned with industry needs. Executive Director Angela Hemingway will provide the first detailed report on the organization’s activities during its initial year of operation.

“STEM jobs in Idaho pay well at a median wage of more than \$32 an hour,” Hemingway noted in advance of the JFAC presentation. “The Governor and Legislature are determined to promote best STEM educational practices. The end result will be Idaho graduates who possess improved STEM skills and a workforce equipped to embrace the higher job growth we foresee in STEM-related fields.”

Idaho anticipates robust job growth in STEM careers by 2024: 14 percent in computing, 9 percent in engineering and 23 percent in advanced manufacturing. The STEM Action Center will coordinate with Idaho industry, educators and citizens to promote learning that leads to better access to competitive employment opportunities through student experiences in both K-12 and higher education.

As enacted by the Legislature and Governor, the Idaho STEM Action Center will “turn knowledge into action” by supporting innovative STEM education programs, STEM professional development, educator grants and student competitions, including a statewide STEM competition. The Center will concentrate on supporting high-quality professional development for educators, engaging industry to support STEM education outcomes, identifying and coordinating K-16 STEM education activities focused on workforce needs, and serving as a STEM research and resource center. The organization also will conduct needs analyses of both industry and education for alignment, highlight innovative STEM practices and support STEM pilot projects.

Hemingway said the broad expertise of the Center’s board of directors will prove invaluable. Board members include: Chairman Dr. Dave Hill, a member of the State Board of Education; vice chair Dee Mooney, executive director of the Micron Foundation; Dr. Todd Allen, deputy director at the Idaho National Laboratory (INL); Kenneth Edmunds, director of the Idaho Department of Labor; Dr. Lorna Finman, CEO of LCF Enterprises; Von Hansen, CEO of AlertSense Inc.; Megan Ronk, director of the Idaho Department of Commerce; Jeff Williams, former CEO of Glanbia Foods; and Dr. Chuck Zimmerly, community relations officer at the Idaho State Department of Education.

“This is an exciting time for Idaho students and educators,” Hemingway said. “Guidance from this distinguished Board will help us adopt best practices for interfacing between industry and education to foster a STEM-educated workforce and ensure Idaho’s continued economic prosperity.”

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