

# impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

## College students learn to be “debt-free” with Ossie’s student success scavenger hunt

### AT A GLANCE

By enlisting an interactive scavenger hunt, college students explore campus services while learning to be financially successful before and after graduation.

### The Situation

The news shares studies about college students graduating with little or no financial knowledge and mounting educational and credit debt. Many students have access to this information but do not seek it out or apply it to their own lives; instead, believing the false financial myths and peer information that has settled on so many college campuses. The adage, “you can lead a horse to water but you cannot make it drink” applies here. For all the programs available to college students, time, awareness, interest and need factor into the reasons students do seek out help when needed.

So the knowledge is out there but where? Many students graduate having no idea where major student service offices and resources are even located. We asked several students nearing graduation if they could tell us where key student offices were. The majority had never been to them, did not know the services were even offered at the university and didn’t know where they were located on the school campus.

### Our Response

University of Idaho Extension teamed with the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALs) and the Margaret Ritchie School of Family and Consumer Sciences

**#1 Marry The "Financially Right" Person**

- ◆ When I say this, I don't mean marry a financial genius or someone who is wealthy. Marry someone who has good financial habits. This personal quality is often ignored during the "courting" process. In fact, you are usually trying to impress your date with expensive dinners, extravagant dates, and impressive presents.
- ◆ If you can't afford something when you're dating, you most likely won't be able to afford it when you're married. Show your partner who you really are financially, and make sure he or she shows you who he or she is before marriage. Don't surprise your partner by changing your financial habits when you're married (and ask the same of your spouse). At that point, it will cause significant issues. Money is one of the biggest things couples fight about.
- ◆ Talk about your "money philosophy." Are you a saver? Is she a spender? Do you believe in debt? Do you want to own a home? What are your assets? What is her salary? Does she owe money? What are the credit histories and credit scores for both of you? Does she have a budget and adhere to it?
- ◆ These are easy questions to answer but not so easy to ask. They are so important, though. You need to have full disclosure of your past, present, and future financial lives. You will learn not only a lot about your potential future spouse but quite a bit about yourself?

**Enter to WIN**  
**\$100 Vandal Bookstore Giftcard**

Send a picture of principle with your name and Vandal Email to [ossie@uidaho.edu](mailto:ossie@uidaho.edu)

Follow Ossie on the Margaret Ritchie School of Family and Consumer Sciences Facebook or Instagram for weekly updates on new locations!

First clue of 25 principles shared with students in Ossie’s Awesome Adventure.

(FCS) to create “Ossie” and her “awesome” financial scavenger hunt to student success. Utilizing a concept designed for elementary school children from Kansas State University called “StoryWalk®,” we created an adventure to intrigue college students to learn more ways to financial wellness by using 25 of 99 personal money management principles from the book “Why Didn’t They Teach Me This In School?” (Siegel) We strategically placed these “clues,” or principles, at key campus locations and services.

Students were first introduced to Ossie through FCS and CALS listserv emails and posters stating: “Who is Ossie? Ossie is your above-average Vandal. Her goal was to graduate from school with little debt so she could focus her time on pillaging and conquering new

worlds. She found that she had overwhelming debt because she didn't know the tricks to making her loot last. She wished someone would have told her what she is about to tell you. Follow her on her awesome adventure to learning how you too can be debt-free when you graduate from college. You must start now though. It is a journey that will lead you to the financial treasures and future success you dream of."

Then to the rules of the game: "Ossie has 25 principles that she wants to share with you this semester. They will be "hidden" on campus for you to find. Find each of the principles, take pictures of all of them, and send them to [ossie@uidaho.edu](mailto:ossie@uidaho.edu) with your name and your Vandal email address. For every principle you find, you will be entered to win a \$100 University of Idaho Bookstore gift card. The more principles you find, the more chances you have to win. The game will go from Sept. 30 to Dec. 13. The final prize will be announced on Dec. 16, 2019. All those that find 10 or more principles and answer three quick questions at the end will receive a gift just for following Ossie's footsteps."

For 10 weeks, we introduced two to three principles on 14" x 20" color posters and shared location clues to the students through FCS and CALS student communications. Each clue was left in its location for at least two weeks. Students were tempted by a \$100 Vandal Bookstore gift card and copies of Cary Siegel's book provided by Shelley McGuire, director of the Margaret Ritchie School of Family and Consumer Sciences.

When "Ossie" (aka Karen Richel) received the email submissions from the students, she asked them specific questions to help them apply the information to their own lives and shared the next location clue.

### Program Outcomes

Nineteen students participated in the entire program. When asked which Ossie principle stuck with them, participants answered:

- "Putting money into a savings account has been helpful because I've had a few

emergencies this semester where I was glad to have extra funds."

- "I think the one about being aware of your partner's financial habits is important and one that I need to pay more attention to, especially as we move forward in life together more."
- "The principle that has stuck with me the most is either the setting of short-term financial goals or realizing that it is possible to get out of college debt free! Both of these were encouraging to me because they showed how small things that I do now impact my financial future."

Students shared that Ossie helped them see that they needed "to budget rent costs more appropriately" to "income," set up a savings schedule and stop spending unnecessarily. Over 50% of the students "found" new services on campus that they did not know existed.

Our impact was also national. The team showcased the program at the Association for Financial Counseling and Planning Education Symposium in November 2019. Our student intern and poster designer, Gabrielle Kessel, won a scholarship to the conference and presented a poster with our results-to-date. Several universities and credit unions contacted us for more information.

In addition, Cary Siegel, the author of the book, was very impressed with our program. He allowed us to use his book on the posters without cost. He has shared our idea with many other universities and has agreed to let us use his new book for our future "adventures" without restrictions.

### The Future

Since Ossie's last adventure, key team members have moved on to other opportunities. Gabrielle graduated and Kelsie Smathers, my FCS colleague, moved to another position. My goal is to enlist new partners for this amazing program. It has the potential to help many students.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Karen Richel**, Financial Literacy Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Latah County • 208-883-2241 • [krichel@uidaho.edu](mailto:krichel@uidaho.edu)

35-20-krichel-ossie • 10/20