economic growth and development in Eastern Idaho. The E Center is facilitating this growth by creating a network of resources including ideas, entrepreneurs, businesses, and capital.” After five years of E Center growth and success with business related projects, the Southeast Idaho Research Institute (SIRI) was formed to facilitate mentored student learning in the sciences as a nonprofit scientific and educational corporation. Together, these organizations have supported hundreds of mentored student projects.

In 2014, a significant decision was made to combine these two nonprofit educational institutions to leverage the strengths of each organization and to expand overall capacity, so the E Center was merged into SIRI. Then, SIRI was renamed the Research and Business Development Center (RBDC) to reflect the new expanded mission. The legacy of both predecessors provided the foundation for the RBDC’s continued service for clients, students, and faculty with excellent opportunities that can ultimately impact the lives of each. The merger has created efficiencies and synergies that are being utilized to scale RBDC’s endeavors to reach an ever greater number of clients, students, and faculty. This new organization is stronger and will be able to dramatically grow mentored student learning opportunities.

Why a Separate, Off Campus Organization

President Clark envisioned an organization that was not encumbered by university policies, did not significantly impact campus facilities, staff, or budgets, and limited BYU–Idaho exposure (legal, financial, use of the university and church name, etc.). As a separate, nonprofit educational corporation, the RBDC reduces university liability as the contracting organization with the private sector and government agencies. The RBDC has access to a greater spectrum of clients and sponsors, as well as federal and corporate/foundations grants that were not
traditionally available to BYU–Idaho. The RBDC’s small staff allows flexibility, speed, and efficiency when working with BYU–Idaho and clients. We are also able to design tailored solutions to meet individual faculty needs.

Separate But Aligned
BYU–Idaho and the RBDC share common goals and objectives which provides the framework for a strong cooperative relationship. Sid Palmer, Dan Moore, and Larry Chilton in the Faculty Development and Mentored Research (FDMR) Office are key partners for the RBDC at BYU–Idaho. Since the formation of FDMR, the RBDC holds routine meetings with the FDMR to ensure alignment of activities and desired outcomes. Our interactions with the FDMR office are a key link to faculty. The RBDC also meets with senior BYU–Idaho leadership routinely to ensure a consistent vision, accomplishment of objectives, and discussion of future initiatives. The RBDC is routinely invited to participate at university events such as faculty conferences and department meetings, or to display at events like the President’s Club Reception.

The RBDC Focus
The RBDC has four divisions that provide applied learning opportunities for students. Those divisions focus on agriculture, business, computer technology, and engineering, each described below. Student teams are often multidisciplinary, which is typical of industry practices, giving the team access to specialized skills outside their discipline. Dividing RBDC’s organization into four divisions has not limited our capability to undertake projects that may not fit within a division. Specialized teams are organized to meet the needs of project sponsors. A brief description of each division follows.

Agriculture
The primary focus of the agriculture division is to test agricultural products through greenhouse or in-field research. Whether it is seed, fungicide, fertilizer, or any number of other products, the faculty and student led research teams have the knowledge and experience to set up and run high quality research studies. The RBDC participates in the annual BYU–Idaho Field Day featuring faculty/student projects. Many of the projects culminate in presentations at national student conferences.

Business
The business division has a primary focus on consumer insights, economic studies, market research, and product testing. Whether it’s analyzing a business plan, performing
a competitive analysis, modeling financial analysis, sizing a market, assessing feasibility, enhancing logistics, or determining economic impact. The RBDC’s professional staff, university faculty mentors, and student-led research teams have the capability to set up and run high quality projects. A flexible approach helps tailor projects based on specific client needs. This format also yields dividends for the students involved. They accelerate their professional growth through exposure to deadlines, budgets, client expectations, unexpected challenges, leadership opportunities, and interpersonal skills. Each project has a final client consult to discuss significant findings and a written report.

**Computer Tech**

RBDC professional staff, university faculty mentors, and student-led teams complete projects that cover a wide range from idea validation, to data analysis to web/mobile design and development, to long-term software maintenance and quality assurance. Businesses and organizations receive quality deliverables while helping students grow within their discipline. Students experience opportunities to solidify programming concepts learned in the classroom through real world application.

**Engineering**

Through partnerships with business and industry the RBDC has provided engineering and physical science students mentored learning opportunities. Engineering projects are centered on either senior capstone design projects or grant sponsored research. Students working on projects are better prepared for employment. Faculty are able to engage in research and projects that provide relevant insights to the challenges clients face today while establishing connections that enable ongoing projects.

**Partnerships – Operational Models – Faculty Support**

The Research and Business Development Center supplies university faculty with an avenue for mentored student projects and hands-on learning opportunities. Faculty can tailor their collaboration with the RBDC at a variety of levels to mentor students on real world projects. The RBDC has two general support models for faculty and mentored projects.

**RBDC Managed Projects** – Projects are generally focused in business, computer technology, and agriculture. RBDC staff can facilitate all aspects of a project. These projects are typically ones where the RBDC finds the client and is primarily responsible for the deliverable to the client.
The RBDC is responsible for:

- Client identification
- Work scope development and project management
- Contracting, billing, etc.
- Recruiting, hiring, and training students
- Active mentoring of students
- All deliverables

Faculty participation is always welcome and takes a variety of forms. For low-level project participation faculty may consult one or two times a semester for a few hours. At the mid-range faculty would typically spend three to five hours per week with student project teams. At the highest level faculty might spend half of their teaching time at the RBDC.

RBDC Administered Projects – Projects are traditionally grants and engineering projects.

The RBDC is responsible for:

- Supporting proposal development
- Contracting, billing, etc.
- Hiring students per faculty direction

One example of an administered project is a large grant underway in the Mechanical Engineering Department. RBDC holds the contract with the granting agency and is responsible for payments and reporting on the contract. Faculty select students for the project and are hired by the RBDC. All technical products are the responsibility of the faculty. Deliverables are generally in the form of publications and student papers/posters.

For more information please visit our website at www.RBDCenter.org. The website includes our staff’s contact information and discussions about your professional development and how to grow your mentored student project experience at BYU–I.

The E Center has a wonderful opportunity to be a catalyst for economic growth and development in Eastern Idaho. The E Center is facilitating this growth by creating a network of resources including ideas, entrepreneurs, businesses and capital.

Kim B. Clark