

Faculty member encourages students to

# DIG DEEP

It's late June. The sky over the Twin Springs campground is overcast, and while there are signs of campers — vehicles and tents — no one is there. A red flag tied to a sagebrush is flapping in the wind. They've left a clue as to where they are. One off-road drive and hike later, they're spotted.

The campers are anthropology professor **Brooke Arkush**, a small team of students and volunteers, and Chopper, a yellow lab who is an eight-year veteran of these summer trips.

The students — budding anthropologists and archaeologists — are busy excavating a remote area of the grasslands looking for artifacts. Arkush is giving instructions. He stops long enough to identify some finds.

"That's a bison long bone," he says, pointing to an object inside a 1-by-2-meter excavation unit. Close by is another artifact. "That's part of a tool hunters would use to break animal bones, to get to the marrow inside."

2011 marks Arkush's 21<sup>st</sup> year at WSU and his 21<sup>st</sup> summer at sites such as this one. "Field experience is critical," he says, "especially for students who want to go on to graduate school or apply for summer internships."

On site, Arkush teaches students how to recover, interpret and document archaeological data. After four weeks at this particular location, the team has been able to conclude that the area was a bison kill and processing site used by hunters as far back as A.D. 500.

"To investigate sites that have never before been excavated and then to be able to tell the story of what happened here years ago is a great learning experience," Arkush is saying when he is interrupted by a find. One of his students has hit on a bison vertebra.

Although a big discovery, they leave it; they have a lot of bone already. It's still exciting. "When you hit on something, it's a huge adrenaline rush. It makes you want to do more, work faster," says junior **Andrew Cross**, whose goal is to become an archaeologist.

Cross has taken three classes from Arkush, a 2011 WSU Presidential Distinguished Professor. He intends to schedule more. "He's very focused and all about the job," he says as he heads over for a final group photo. Tomorrow is the last day at the site. As they line up, Arkush mentions that the trip has been a success.

Everyone agrees.

FOR 21 YEARS, A WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY ANTHROPOLOGY PROFESSOR HAS TAKEN STUDENTS ON SUMMER ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS. THE LATEST, IN IDAHO'S CURLEW NATIONAL GRASSLANDS, WAS A SUCCESS, IN TERMS OF FINDS AND AWE-INSPIRING LEARNING EXPERIENCES.

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— Brooke Arkush, anthropology professor and 2011 Presidential Distinguished Professor

