

Distinguished Alumna

MARLENE TROMP

Marlene Tromp loves teaching. She is an English professor with degrees from Creighton University, the University of Wyoming (M.A. '90) and the University of Florida and now serves as president of Boise State University since 2019. Tromp didn't set out to be a university president or administrator, but she wanted to help college students have the same opportunities she received. "I had someone ask me this question, 'Over the course of your career, do you want to affect hundreds of students or hundreds of thousands of students? How much love do you have to give?'" Tromp says. "The answer was easy. As a university president, I have the honor and privilege of getting to impact hundreds of thousands of students in a way that allows them to get what I got from my higher-education experience. That's the greatest honor of my life."

Her impressive career includes serving as executive vice chancellor at the University of California Santa Cruz, vice provost at Arizona State University's west campus and dean of the New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences.

Tromp grew up in Green River and was a first generation college student. She didn't realize how special growing up in Wyoming was until she went away to college and talked to other students who didn't make their hometown sport teams because there were too many students. She also recalls the gift of visiting Yellowstone and Flaming Gorge regularly.

"I got the chance to study, explore and have all these experiences growing up in this amazing place," Tromp says.

Students and professors often choose UW either because they have a connection to Wyoming or because they fall in love with UW's unique location.

"It's this incredible experience of being with all these people who have a deep love for this place," Tromp says of her time as a UW student and later a visiting professor. "With the faculty, it's hard for me not to get choked up when I talk about them. What a commitment they had.

It makes it possible for students to go on to do great things, and it makes the university great."

While it's hard to find time for her research on 19th century life and culture, Tromp has managed to achieve numerous publications.

"Right now I'm working on unsolved or belatedly solved murder cases from the 19th century," she says of her latest book, which is nearly done. "It's so interesting. I co-taught with a forensic scientist when I was at Arizona State, and we solved a 19th century cold case."

Her previous books on seances and freak shows reveal her interest in things that rest on the edge of popular culture and how those things impact society.

Tromp remembers her UW English faculty fondly and stays in touch with these colleagues, such as Professor Caroline McCracken-Flesher, and occasionally guest lectures to her classes. Many of these colleagues also turned out for her inauguration at Boise State, donning their brown and gold.

"My whole life, they've been a part of my journey," she says.

This year, Tromp also received outstanding alumni honors from Green River High School. "It's hard for me to even explain how much it means to me to be honored by my high school and UW the same year," she says.

On her wall hangs a poster of the Tetons with Helen Mettler's quote: "God bless Wyoming, and keep it wild."

Tromp says, "My love for Wyoming is so much a part of who I am, so to feel that love back means the world to me."



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