

# EITC mascot creates a sense of community

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*Figure 1 Eastern Idaho Technical College's mascot joins in on a volleyball game during a Wednesday afternoon student barbecue. Students are renaming the Falcon. Meanwhile the college hopes to use the mascot to raise awareness about EITC. Monte LaOrange photo.*

Some may be surprised to learn that Eastern Idaho Technical College — a school lacking an athletic department — boasts its own mascot. But for the students of EITC, their Falcon mascot is a necessary symbol of school pride, regardless of whether they have football, basketball or cricket.

Last week, EITC students voted to rename their mascot (formally known as Pedro) during the school's semester barbecue.

According to EITC's Student Senate President Crystal Lacey, 27, there's a rumor on campus the students named the Falcon Pedro in reference to the character from "Napoleon Dynamite." Recently, however, the Student Senate decided to change the mascot's name through a school wide election. Lacey did not give a specific reason for the Falcon's rechristening but only said that "it was time for a change."

The decision, she said, was "controversial."

During the barbecue, students had the opportunity to vote for Felix, Flynn or Frankie. In the end, Frankie won out.

Ironically, no one voted for Pedro.

Although students and staff proudly wore Falcon t-shirts and baseball caps as they ate hamburgers and played volleyball in the afternoon sun, no one could say with certainty when the Falcon moniker was adopted.



*Figure 2 Eastern Idaho Technical College's mascot (formally Pedro the Falcon) mingles with students and faculty during a student barbecue held on campus. Students are voting to rename the mascot as the Student Senate looks for ways the falcon can represent EITC in the community. Monte LaOrange photo.*

According to Todd Wightman, EITC's Director of College Relations and Marketing, the Falcon began as a simple image for letterheads and EITC memorabilia.

But around 5 years ago, the college rolled out a fully fledged Falcon mascot at school events and charity drives. Boasting a large ample beak and feathery bouffant, the mascot stood behind students as they performed the ribbon-cutting ceremony for their new student union, The Falcon's Nest, in February.

In another event, the Falcon cheered on runners during the annual Michelle Kern Memorial 5K. The school even held a food drive in the Falcon's name: Pedro's Pasta Push.

While the mascot election may seem trivial to outsiders, Student Senate members see the event as an opportunity to increase community engagement among students.

"I think the mascot gives people more of a drive to be in the school," said Brycen Wintch, 23, Student Senate Vice President. Wintch also said the mascot "brings in more of a college feel."

Although EITC doesn't have the bells and whistles of a large four-year institution, the technical college has something that many universities don't always have: a meaningful civic engagement with its surrounding community. As Wightman pointed out, many of EITC's extra-curricular activities are service-minded, providing students the opportunity to not only connect with each other but also the Idaho Falls community.

"We are not just a building — something that takes up space and time and money," said EITC Admissions Counselor Justin Esplin. "We are an integral part of the community that gives back."