
From: Office of the President <noreply@m.uidaho.edu>
Sent: Friday, February 13, 2026 6:01 AM
To:
Subject: Powering the conversation

Letter from the President



Office of the President, president@uidaho.edu
Feb. 13, 2026

Dear Vandals,

In a state where hydropower has long powered industry and cities, where natural gas pipelines cross the state, where experimental nuclear reactors hum in the high desert, and where solar arrays spread across once-fallow landscapes, Idaho's energy story has always been one of abundance and complexity.

Next month, the University of Idaho will gather a diverse group of leaders shaping that story for a first-of-its-kind conversation about what comes next. The inaugural Energy Symposium, being held in Moscow, aims to build dialogue around energy solutions and the many stakeholders involved.

U of I Energy Institute Executive Director John Kumm convened the symposium to bring together industry leaders, policymakers, students and community members. The [symposium will address](#) critical questions facing the energy sector, from the availability of natural gas to the sustainability of solar panels to the benefits of nuclear energy.

The U of I plays a central role in education on the increasingly complex energy landscape. Just one year after its inception, the institute is carrying out U of I's land-grant mission delivering practical education and advancing solutions that improve the lives of Idahoans.

"One of the university's responsibilities is to convene conversations around challenging topics," Kumm said.

Kumm, who has more than 30 years of experience in power engineering, knows the terrain. He understands why industry veterans sometimes bristle at oversimplified solutions and why newcomers to energy policy can feel overwhelmed by the sector's limits.

"If you haven't worked inside the energy industry, it's hard to appreciate the constraints on people delivering a really valuable service," he said. "The people attracted to this field are wired to solve hard problems."

The symposium showcases that problem-solving spirit across two packed days. Students will present energy research before veteran journalist Robert Bryce takes the stage. With six books and two documentaries to his name, Bryce has built a reputation for practical and sometimes provocative takes on energy policy.

"He's been a journalist in energy his entire career and I've enjoyed his commentary," Kumm said. "He's very pragmatic and he calls it like he sees it."

The second day of the symposium will showcase perspectives from Avista CEO Heather Rosentrater, former U.S. Congressman Garret Graves and Nez Perce Tribal Chairman Shannon Wheeler. Panel discussions will tackle hydroelectric licensing, nuclear energy fuel supply chain and development, permitting reform, and other topics.

Partnerships with Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories, Idaho Power, Idaho National Laboratory and others ensure students aren't just learning theory — they're preparing to shape Idaho's energy future. In a state where pipelines, hydroelectric dams, nuclear reactors and renewable installations sometimes coexist uneasily, that education couldn't be more timely.

Donor Michael Hunter provided an endowment to fund the U of I Energy Institute to help boost energy education and bring more people on board to find solutions.

The symposium won't solve Idaho's energy challenges in two days, but by creating space for honest conversation and practical solutions, it might just show the way forward.

Go Vandals!

C. Scott Green

President



Snapshots

New meat science center welcomes students

The new Meat Science and Innovation Center Honoring Ron Richard welcomed its first students this week. The 12,750-square-foot building replaces a facility that was constructed in the 1960s and will allow for expanded teaching, training and production space. The official grand opening will be held April 10.

[Learn more.](#)

Cover to serve as College of Law interim dean

Professor Aliza Cover will serve as interim dean of the U of I College of Law. It is the second term as interim dean for Cover, who served during the summer of 2024. She joined the College of Law in 2014 and focuses on criminal law, criminal procedure and the death penalty.

[Learn more.](#)

Food safety program expands across the state

The popular Virtual Food Safety program, offered through UI Extension, recently began its sixth season. The popular courses cover different aspects of gardening and food preservation and webinars have drawn up to 300 participants.

[Learn more.](#)



After winning its eighth straight game last week, the Vandal women's basketball team is ranked No. 22 in the Collegeinsider.com Women's Mid-Major Top 25 poll.



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