
From: Office of the President <noreply@m.uidaho.edu>
Sent: Friday, February 27, 2026 6:01 AM
To:
Subject: Professional development woven into business curriculum

Letter from the President



Office of the President, president@uidaho.edu
Feb. 27, 2026

Dear Vandals,

University of Idaho students graduate with practical knowledge and hands-on experience — and the new Vandal Professional Development Initiative aims to take that further, ensuring students are not only prepared for their careers but ready to excel in them.

Launched last fall by the College of Business and Economics (CBE), the initiative was made possible through funding from longtime supporters Sharon and Rich Allen, both U of I alumni. Sharon is a pioneer in the accounting world, having made history as the first woman to chair one of the Big Four accounting firms when she led Deloitte & Touche from 2003 to 2011. Rich used his engineering degree to help operate and

maintain dams in the Northwest for the Bureau of Reclamation and then as a successful Boise business owner.

The Allens' vision for U of I students targets a serious career readiness gap. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers' 2025 Job Outlook, only half of employers believe college graduates are well-prepared in professionalism or work ethic — and fewer than half say graduates demonstrate strong career and self-development capabilities.

To close that gap, all CBE students now take courses in career readiness and professionalism. Instructor Jen Goodwin said the courses give students practice in discussing their experiences and connecting them to their career goals.

“We’ve found that Vandals are often brave and bold — until they need to express their strengths with clarity and confidence,” Goodwin said. “Employers want technical skills, but they also really need communication skills. They want employees they can put in front of a client and trust to communicate well.”

Designed for first- and second-year students, the courses aim to build a career mindset early. The career readiness course covers job searches, resume writing, interview practice and career fairs, while the professionalism course develops presentation skills, emotional intelligence, communication and goal setting.

“We start by looking inward — how to articulate your strengths, talk about your background and leverage your experiences,” Goodwin said. “Then we move outward into next career steps.”

Beyond the classroom, the initiative includes an industry night speaker series where recent U of I alumni share their early career experiences. Students can also access a professional attire closet stocked with free clothing donated by businesses and alumni.

Goodwin said she's encouraged by the program's early impact and by the Allens' commitment to Idaho students.

"The Allens have a deep belief in Idaho students, who are gritty and humble. Confidently articulating what they bring to the table doesn't always come naturally," she said. "But these are learned skills. No one is born with professionalism. We develop it through exposure and repetition."

Thanks to the Allens and the hard work of CBE, our graduates enter the workforce with both the technical and business environment knowledge they will need to succeed.

Go Vandals!

C. Scott Green
President



Snapshots

U of I professor models potato farmers' water usage

U of I professor Meetpal Kukal recently shared his findings that Idaho potato fields consume up to 40% less water than previous models suggest. Kukal monitored fields in southwest Idaho for several years to gather his data, which he presented in a report at the Idaho Potato Conference in Pocatello last month.

[Learn more.](#)

INL partnership expands Idaho research capabilities

A partnership with Idaho National Laboratory is expanding research capabilities at the U of I and other public universities in the state. The Lemhi computer system replaces the Falcon supercomputer and provides faster performance and improved efficiency.

[Learn more.](#)

Boise to host Big Sky Conference tournaments

The Big Sky Conference men's and women's basketball tournaments, also known as Starch Madness, will be held at Boise's Idaho Central Arena March 7-11. Tickets are available for one-day sessions, or each full tournament.

[Learn more.](#)



Vandal Giving Day is coming up April 7-8. Over the past nine years, 13,271 gifts were made, raising more than \$6.5 million for the University of Idaho.



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