
From: Office of the President <noreply@m.uidaho.edu>
Sent: Friday, April 3, 2026 6:01 AM
To:
Subject: U of I meets students where they are

Letter from the President



Office of the President, president@uidaho.edu
April 3, 2026

Dear Vandals,

As director of recruitment for the University of Idaho, Daisy Aguilera-Gonzalez makes her pitch to thousands of high school students each year about the value of a Vandal education. As a soon-to-be three-time Vandal alumna, she brings firsthand experience to the role.

One of her toughest skeptics was her sister Annai, who initially planned to head out of state for college, determined to forge her own path in higher education.

“I was pretty set in stone on leaving Idaho,” said Annai, who grew up in Homedale and attended Caldwell High School. “My sister convinced me to give Uldaho Bound a chance, and as

much as I hated to admit it, she was right because I really connected with the community here.”

Most students do not have a sister like Daisy, but the Small Town Outreach and Rural Yield (STORY) consortium is working to reach students in every corner of Idaho — and the U of I is playing a pivotal role.

The [STORY consortium](#) connects rural students across the country with top-tier universities, giving students in small communities access to admissions professionals and resources they might never otherwise encounter. With more than 35 institutions involved, the consortium’s membership includes some of the top schools in the country: Brown University, New York University, Claremont McKenna College and the University of Delaware — alongside the U of I.

“We offer a strong value proposition for students and their families, with a campus and degree programs that uniquely position us to serve students from rural communities,” said Aguilera-Gonzalez, reflecting on what first attracted STORY’s attention.

Recognized as a Best Value Public University by U.S. News and World Report for six straight years, the U of I fits in alongside some of the top academic schools in the country. The U of I offers the research breadth of an R1 university with accessibility that elite coastal schools simply cannot match.

This spring, the U of I posted its 10th straight semester of growth and the highest spring enrollment in school history. As of Fall 2025, nearly 3,500 rural students — 28 percent of the university’s total enrollment — call U of I home, a number that has kept pace with the growth over the past five years.

The university is working hard to keep that momentum going. Through STORY, U of I participates in two online sessions this spring that bring together students in rural communities across the country. STORY complements many other recruiting efforts,

including [Enroll Idaho](#), which sends U of I leaders to schools across the state to inspire students to pursue education beyond high school.

The barriers rural students face are real. Many attend small high schools where counselors double as teachers and coaches, leaving little time for one-on-one college guidance. Families may be unaware of major scholarship opportunities. For Idaho's fastest-growing demographic — Latinx students — language barriers add another layer of complexity to an already daunting process.

U of I recruiters meet students where they are — literally. They connect with prospective students in local coffee shops, community centers, high schools and even in homes. Recruiters have conversations in Spanish when needed, simplify financial aid into clear, accessible language and highlight that the university has no application fee for in-state students and no enrollment deposit.

The personal touch makes a difference. Thanks to dedicated faculty and staff, Annai studied abroad and jumped into organizations like Multicultural Greek life, the Martin Institute, the College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences Ambassador program and many more. She's headed to graduate school next year to pursue a Master's in Public Administration.

"The Moscow community really helped shape my interest in public service," Annai said. "I've had professors who've pushed me to excel, but they're also good people who check in on me and truly care."

For rural students across Idaho, higher education is not just accessible, it's a valuable investment. At the U of I, they have access to a world class education in their backyard.

Go Vandals!

C. Scott Green
President



Snapshots

Himes named AAAS fellow

Katherine E. Himes earned one of the top honors in academics when she was named a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Himes is the director of the McClure Center for Public Policy Research and is the seventh U of I researcher to be named a AAAS fellow.

[Learn more.](#)

U of I professor explores water storage in plant systems

Meng Zhao, professor in the Department of Earth and Spatial Sciences at the U of I, leads a team that is using NASA satellite data to prove that plant systems hold more moisture in their roots than previously believed. Their water retention helps them survive drought and preserve ecosystems.

[Learn more.](#)

Spirit squad captain promotes safety, competition

U of I senior Gracie McClendon helped keep the Vandal Spirit Squad injury-free as they cheered their way to a national title in the College Game Day Fight Song category. McClendon, who is earning her degree in movement sciences, developed personalized workouts for her teammates to help strengthen their ankles and wrists and avoid injury.

[Learn more.](#)



U of I professor Brett Wilder estimates that Idaho agriculture producers generated a record \$12.1 billion in cash receipts in 2025.



Copyright © 2026 University of Idaho, All rights reserved.

You received this email because of your affiliation with the University of Idaho.

University of Idaho
875 Perimeter Drive

Moscow, ID 83844
info@uidaho.edu

[Forward this email to a friend](#)