
From: Office of the President <noreply@m.uidaho.edu>
Sent: Friday, April 24, 2026 6:01 AM
To:
Subject: Exchange programs further international collaboration

Letter from the President



Office of the President, president@uidaho.edu
April 24, 2026

Dear Vandals,

The connection between the University of Idaho and Hiroshima University began with an envelope of seeds and \$3.

In 1951, six years after the atomic bomb leveled his Japanese city, Hiroshima University President Tatsuo Morito wrote to institutions around the world asking for help building a peace-focused campus on ground that was still healing. He requested books and, if possible, seeds — something to transform what he described as “bare, desolate ground destitute of a single tree” into “a fresh green color, which is a color of growth and hope.” U of I forestry Professor Merrill Deters answered the call, sending seeds of the western white pine and white fir, a copy of

the book “Foundations of Silviculture” and \$3. The U of I was one of only eight institutions in the United States to send seeds.

Now, more than 70 years later, that quiet act of goodwill has grown into something substantial. In May, 32 U of I students will explore Hiroshima as part of the inaugural U of I and Hiroshima University Mega Exchange. It’s the most ambitious chapter yet in a partnership rooted in the shared belief that education and connection are essential to lasting peace.

For many of the students making the 10-day trip, the journey to Hiroshima began long before they booked their flights.

Over the past several years, U of I students have engaged deeply with Hiroshima’s history through a series of events and projects. In 2022, atomic bombing survivor Keiko Ogura spoke at a Remembering Hiroshima event in Moscow. In 2023, a group of U of I students translated Ogura’s children’s story into English and traveled to Japan to present the project. In 2024, the U of I awarded Ogura an honorary doctorate in humane letters.

For junior Nikki Rhodes, that arc of engagement has been transformative. She was part of the TSS Archive Project, a collaboration with a Hiroshima-based television station in which U of I Japanese-language students provided subtitles for documentaries, news segments and survivor testimonies posted online.

“In high school, the way Hiroshima’s history was talked about in class didn’t really have an impact,” said Rhodes, who has completed six semesters of Japanese at U of I. “Comparing that to hearing actual survivors talk about people crying for water and dealing with radiation sickness — those things aren’t shown in a textbook, and it makes a big difference.”

Rhodes said U of I Professors Azusa Tojo (Japanese) and Rayce Bird (virtual technology and design) inspire her to explore history and share it creatively and impactfully. Her

interest in Japanese and Asian culture stretches back to elementary school in Kuna, where she and friends began exploring the region's art and traditions. At the U of I, Rhodes created artwork for Asia Pop events and traveled to South Korea last year with the Habib Institute for Asian Studies and the Department of History. She will continue her language study in Japan this summer at KCP International Japanese Language School in Tokyo.

For Maggie Fulbright, a freshman from Lewistown, Montana, the Mega Exchange is a personal pilgrimage.

"My great-grandparents on my mother's side immigrated from Japan in 1907 and 1914," said Fulbright, a communications major and honors program member. "My grandfather grew up during World War II and never really shared about our family history or Japanese culture because he wanted to fit in in the U.S. This is a great opportunity to go and learn about the culture and the history of Japan."

The College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences raised scholarship funds to support the students traveling to Hiroshima. They will tour the Peace Memorial Museum and Hiroshima Peace Park, along with rice farms and fisheries, and explore themes of peace and sustainability through group discussions and classroom learning.

University of Idaho Foundation Board chair Clint Marshall is excited to help send U of I students on a trip that will shape perspectives and broaden horizons.

"I was able to join the group that went to Hiroshima last month and it was eye-opening to see the magnitude of what's going on between our universities," Marshall said. "I'm of the belief that you attend a university to have transformative experiences, and it would be hard to beat the experience that these students are going to have."

The Mega Exchange is not the only new frontier in the partnership. The U of I College of Engineering is launching the [Microchip Engineering and Security Alliance](#), or MESA, a partnership with Hiroshima University's highly rated engineering program that will help address the global demand for semiconductor talent. Electrical engineering students will spend their first two years learning in English at the Higashi-Hiroshima Campus before completing their degrees in Moscow. The program aims to strengthen the semiconductor manufacturing workforce in both nations.

The scope of everything now underway traces back to a forestry professor in Moscow who once mailed tree seeds to a city rebuilding after devastation. Both institutions have grown toward each other ever since.

Go Vandals!

C. Scott Green
President



Snapshots

Vandals to perform at USS Idaho commissioning

Students and faculty from the U of I's Lionel Hampton School of Music will perform at the commissioning of the USS Idaho in Connecticut Saturday, April 25. The performance will include original arrangements by Professor Dan Bukvich, featuring Idaho's fight song, state song, the national anthem and a medley of all five military branch anthems.

[Learn more.](#)

Grad student housing project nears completion

The U of I is replacing decades-old graduate student housing with South Hill, a new development bringing 120 units and 188 rooms to campus, set to open in Fall 2026. Simultaneously, 1960s-era undergraduate residence halls are being modernized with upgrades including air conditioning, with the full project expected to be completed in Summer 2027.

[Learn more.](#)

Wharton helping potato producers combat black dot disease

U of I plant pathologist Phillip Wharton has published management recommendations drawn from a decade of research to help Idaho potato farmers battle black dot, a fungal disease that has become increasingly prevalent and damaging to potato crops.

[Learn more.](#)



U of I javelin thrower Blake Sturgis earned Big Sky Conference Athlete of the Week honors for the second time this season after his performance at the Beach Invitational.



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