
From: Office of the President <noreply@m.uidaho.edu>
Sent: Friday, May 1, 2026 6:01 AM
To:
Subject: U of I seniors make breakthroughs with AI

Letter from the President



Office of the President, president@uidaho.edu
May 1, 2026

Dear Vandals,

This year, University of Idaho students applied AI to help a Moscow-based company deliver its services to the global marketplace. They mapped the paths of tiny tendons in rats with the help of machine-learning tools. And Vandals designed industrial robotics that help make a paper company's warehouse floor safer.

These projects and dozens more take center stage at the [Engineering Design EXPO](#) on the Moscow campus today. Our keynote speaker this year is Thomas Mueller, a U of I alumnus from St. Maries who was the first founding employee at SpaceX and is the founder and CEO of Impulse Space. We are

fortunate that, despite how busy he is, he likes to come to Moscow to spend time with our students.

The College of Engineering's capstone program pairs teams of students with organizations to tackle real-world challenges and present solutions to peers, industry professionals and the public.

Alice Miller interned at Lightcast as a Moscow High School student. When the Moscow-based company later sought a U of I team to streamline the translation of its labor market data services into different languages, she jumped at the opportunity. Miller led a group that developed an AI-enabled application that can translate the company's offerings into other languages, allowing the company to serve markets all over the world.

"Lightcast has its own translators, but by using AI to run initial translations, they can edit the text to make sure it's true and accurate," said Miller, a computer science major. "The app itself was pretty straightforward to build. We wanted to make sure the user interface was designed well and was easy to navigate. The hope is that Lightcast can begin using it as soon as we're done and integrate it into their process."

Ian McCall and his group needed a crash course in tendon engineering to tackle their project. McCall and his team helped create 3D reconstructions of tendon structures to support the research of U of I Professor Nathan Schiele, which could ultimately improve treatments for the millions of human tendon injuries each year.

"Tendons are made of these bundles of fiber and they are woven together, so we were trying to map the fiber patterns," said McCall, a senior from Lewiston. "I've done other projects, but this was the biggest deep dive into a particular focus area. It was definitely beneficial."

A team of students at U of I Coeur d'Alene worked with Inland Empire Paper Company to design an automated system that helps move heavy rolls of paper and improve safety at the company's Millwood, Washington, factory.

Coeur d'Alene native Michael Habermann and his peers created an online replica of the warehouse and then used simulation software to create a robotic system designed to move the paper rolls. The team estimates the company could save more than \$600,000 each year by implementing the automated solution.

"The estimated renovation costs are about \$585,000, so the company would make back its money in one year based on our numbers," said Habermann, who plans to attend graduate school part-time at U of I Coeur d'Alene in the fall while working at F5, an app delivery and security company, in Liberty Lake.

Miller, McCall and Habermann all graduate next month and have jobs waiting for them. Their experiences at the U of I give them the confidence to step into their careers with purpose.

"I first studied robotics in high school and learned programming, but through the capstone program I really learned how to be part of a team," Habermann said. "In classes we learned how robots work, but on this project we learned on the job."

Vandals lead the way in AI technology and application. The hands-on training they receive in concert with our industry partners prepares our students to step into rewarding careers after graduation.

Go Vandals!

C. Scott Green

President



Snapshots

Moscow Furniture Show celebrates creativity, community collaboration

The College of Art and Architecture will host the Moscow Furniture Show on Saturday, May 2, at the 1912 Center in Moscow. The event showcases furniture built by third-year students alongside work from regional professionals. The free event includes live music, food, voting for student designs and raffle prizes.

[Learn more.](#)

Students connect over book on America's unsung heroes

As part of the America250 initiative, U of I education students and Moscow Middle School students connected through this

year's Common Read, "The Small and the Mighty" by Sharon McMahon.

[Learn more.](#)

USDA reinstates \$59M agriculture grant

The U.S. Department of Agriculture restored funding for the Innovative Agriculture and Marketing Partnership program. The five-year, \$59 million grant is designed to incentivize Idaho farmers to experiment with creative marketing strategies and resilient production practices.

[Learn more.](#)

**Did
you?
know**

Vandal golfer Josh McCartain was named Big Sky Conference Player of the Year. The senior finished the season with a 71.1 scoring average.



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