
From: Office of the President <noreply@m.uidaho.edu>
Sent: Friday, May 8, 2026 6:01 AM
To:
Subject: Grad students key to U of I success

Letter from the President



Office of the President, president@uidaho.edu
May 8, 2026

Dear Vandals,

The U of I's journey to Carnegie R1 recognition, the highest research activity designation, was simultaneously a long march and a heavy lift. Many hands make light work, and our growing pool of doctoral students was critical to our success.

This coming week, we will graduate what is projected to be the largest class of doctoral candidates in our history. Balancing rigorous research and demanding teaching roles, Jennifer Wilcox and Jack Kredell were fully engaged in our strategic push to be Idaho's premier R1 research institution.

Between studying viruses and bacteria in tobacco hornworms and introducing University of Idaho undergraduates to college-

level biology, Wilcox organizes STEM-focused discussions at a Moscow brewery.

A biological sciences student, Wilcox studies viruses that target bacteria and the conditions that inhibit their ability to fight harmful infections. Her work could help improve phage therapy, which uses bacteria-targeting viruses to treat illness.

Wilcox returned to school after two decades as a floral designer in Spokane, where she leaned on her first bachelor's degree in art. Her second degree in pre-med biology exposed her to lab work, in which she thrived as a Vandal.

While in graduate school, Wilcox also gained an appreciation for teaching and science communication, which led her to found Science on Tap. The monthly community events showcase scientists discussing their STEM-related research in a casual, approachable venue — Hunga Dunga Brewing Co. in Moscow.

“A lot of scientists have a hard time explaining what they do,” said Wilcox, who hopes to teach at the university level after graduation. “We work in an office or lab all day and we don’t always do a good job sharing. As an artist, I learned that 50% of your job is talking about your work.”

On top of writing his dissertation on the history of wildfire over the past century and teaching environmental science courses, Jack Kredell helps the U of I Library archive stories about Idaho’s now-extinct North Idaho mountain caribou. After completing his bachelor’s degree at Penn State University, Kredell earned his master’s degree from the U of I in English. For his doctoral work, he pivoted to environmental science. He worked with the U of I’s [Confluence Lab](#), a multi-college initiative that explores environmental issues impacting rural communities.

Kredell’s doctoral studies explored wildfire management and its effect on individuals and communities going back to the Big Burn in 1910. He analyzed the visual rhetoric of Smokey Bear

posters and the emotional dimensions of rural eyewitness accounts of wildfires and their impacts.

“I’ve done a lot of public-facing work, and in social sciences that kind of approach is less common, so it’s something I really value as a scholar,” Kredell said. “For my dissertation, I spent a lot of time with interviews, hearing stories of fire and getting to know these people and these voices. They became like friends, so there was a sense of urgency to communicate how these people feel about the changing world.”

In the little spare time he had, Kredell worked with the Center for Digital Inquiry and Learning to gather personal stories, artifacts and records about Idaho history, including the [disappearance of caribou](#) from the Idaho panhandle and information about the [Taylor Wilderness Research Station](#).

Our U of I graduate students strengthen our land-grant mission through their discoveries. Their work in our labs, fields, rangelands, forests and waterways drives our R1 research enterprise, whether they are advancing viral therapy or helping to preserve Idaho’s environmental history. They are part of a bigger team doing the heavy lifting required to build a better future.

Go Vandals!

C. Scott Green
President



Snapshots

U of I students present Ketchum housing project

Four U of I students spent a semester designing middle-income housing developments for four Ketchum sites. Each student produced timber-forward designs ranging from a four-unit complex near existing condos to a nine-unit development along the Wood River Trail.

[Learn more.](#)

Clavijo joins U of I to advance Idaho fruit production

Jonathan Clavijo-Herrera, a fruit researcher with advanced degrees from the University of Florida, joined the U of I's Parma Research and Extension Center in March 2026 as an assistant professor and pomology specialist. Clavijo will focus his Idaho research on apples, cherries and peaches.

[Learn more.](#)

Master's degree a long time coming for Gividen

Rick Gividen, an Army veteran who has taught remote continuing education for government agencies for 25 years, is completing a master's degree in leadership and organization development. For his capstone project, Gividen created Fire Behavior Face-Off, a video game-style quiz to test wildland firefighters' knowledge of fire behavior while keeping them engaged through competition.

[Learn more.](#)

Did
you?
know

U of I professors Shelley McGuire and Alistair Smith were both recently awarded the title University Distinguished Professor, the university's highest faculty honor.



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