
From: Office of the President <noreply@m.uidaho.edu>
Sent: Friday, June 26, 2026 6:00 AM
To:
Subject: AI degrees build on decades of foundation

Letter from the President



Office of the President, president@uidaho.edu
June 26, 2026

Dear Vandals,

Over the past 40 years, the University of Idaho has educated students in the fundamental technologies of today's AI revolution — from machine learning and robotics to data analysis and intelligent systems. That legacy now positions U of I to meet a critical moment.

In 1986, the U of I offered one of the nation's first AI courses, laying the foundation for nearly four decades of leadership in the field. The course introduced students to topics central to AI today, including inductive and deductive reasoning and natural language processing.

This fall, a new chapter in that history begins as the U of I introduces [bachelor's and master's degrees in AI](#). Idaho industries are racing to adopt the technology, creating enormous demand for workers who can not only use these tools but also build them.

“We teach students to understand how AI models work and how to create new tools,” said Steve Wang, professor and computer science department chair, who helped shape the new curriculum. “They become the tool builders.”

What sets the U of I's AI programs apart is what students actually do. While many AI degrees teach students to plug into existing software platforms, the U of I's curriculum emphasizes deep technical understanding and applied, real-world problem solving.

Last year, computer science students developed an AI algorithm to improve safety and increase production at [Amalgamated Sugar's factories](#). Another team created automated systems to help orchard operators [monitor environmental conditions](#), boosting yields and conserving resources. The project was funded by an Idaho Global Entrepreneurial Mission Grant and engaged both graduate and undergraduate students. Meanwhile, College of Engineering faculty members and graduate students are using AI to unlock the complexities of ALS, collaborating with the Washington University School of Medicine on research recently honored with a [Longitude Prize on ALS Discovery Award](#).

These aren't theoretical projects or simulations. They are production-grade solutions, deployed in the field and making a measurable difference in Idaho and beyond.

The U of I doesn't just teach AI, it runs on it. The university has made significant investments in homegrown AI solutions that demonstrate the kind of institutional commitment students and faculty benefit from every day.

The Vandalizer, an award-winning AI system developed on campus, streamlines the university's research grant processes — saving thousands of hours of tedious administrative work each year. The system has been adopted by more than 100 institutions across the country.

The U of I has also launched an internal AI platform powered by the computing infrastructure we placed at Idaho National Laboratory, keeping sensitive research data secure while dramatically expanding the university's analytical capabilities. Students and faculty gain hands-on access to frontier AI models running on research-grade hardware — the same caliber of tools shaping the field's future.

U of I offers a full spectrum of AI education to meet learners where they are:

- **Bachelor's degree in AI** — A rigorous [undergraduate program](#) grounding students in the theory, design and application of intelligent systems.
- **Master's degree in AI** — The [M. Engr.](#) and the [M.S.](#) programs are available in Moscow, Coeur d'Alene and fully online, designed for both full-time students and working professionals.
- **Minor in AI** — For students across disciplines who want foundational knowledge and practical skills in machine learning and AI.
- **Certificate programs** — Growing rapidly in popularity, with enrollment nearly doubling last spring.

The master's program is especially well-suited for working professionals.

"The master's degree is more targeted to professionals in the field," Wang said. "There is real demand for retraining employees with skills in AI design."

The urgency behind these programs is real. According to the U.S. Department of Education, there are nearly 891,000 AI-related jobs across the United States right now, with that

number expected to grow 17% by 2034. Median earnings in the region are projected to exceed \$144,000 annually.

All U of I students, regardless of major, will learn how AI applies to their fields and enter the workforce prepared for the jobs of the future.

“AI is not a passing trend — it’s here to stay,” Wang said. “As the technology continues to evolve, our students and faculty have an opportunity to help shape its future and be part of the solutions that address real-world challenges.”

By combining a four-decade legacy with unmatched hands-on experience and institutional investment, U of I is producing graduates ready to lead Idaho — and the nation — into an AI-powered future.

Go Vandals!

C. Scott Green
President



Snapshots

U of I elected to research consortium

The Universities Space Research Association elected the U of I to its consortium of leading research institutions, formally inducting the university on March 27, and bringing USRA's total membership to 122 universities. The recognition highlights U of I's contributions to space science, aerospace education and student-led research.

[Learn more.](#)

Student revives Vandal Wrestling Club

Sophomore Keven Martinez built up the U of I wrestling club from no competitions to an All-American finish at the national championships in just two years. The Caldwell native recruits students, secures practice facilities and coaches the team, all while competing himself.

[Learn more.](#)

CAA students help modernize Bovill

Students from the U of I's College of Art and Architecture teamed up to help the City of Bovill address infrastructure upgrades and wildfire mitigation. Student proposals include renovating historic buildings, upgrading the RV park, improving parking and installing bioswales to reduce flood and fire risk in the small Idaho community.

[Learn more.](#)



Vandals Blake Sturgis and Constanze Paoli both earned second-team All-American honors at the NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships.



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