
From: Office of the President <noreply@m.uidaho.edu>
Sent: Friday, November 21, 2025 6:01 AM
To:
Subject: POP Talks showcase U of I research

Letter from the President



Office of the President, president@uidaho.edu
Nov. 21, 2025

Dear Vandals,

Eight outstanding University of Idaho faculty members showcased the depth and breadth of Idaho's R1 research institution at POP Talks last month. And it took them just a few minutes each.

The popular annual event gives U of I research center stage and allows our faculty to discuss the power of possibility within a wide variety of fields. Videos of the 3-minute POP Talks are now [live online](#).

Simona Picardi, assistant professor of wildlife ecology and management, emerged as the victor after the audience voted for their favorite talk. Picardi discussed how she uses GPS

tracking and data science to learn about animals' migration patterns and behaviors, which reveals important data about ecosystems. [Picardi](#) took home a \$2,500 research award for her winning presentation.

Philosophy Professor Bert Baumgaertner challenged the audience to discover how human intelligence differs from AI when it comes to metaphors. His [MARC project](#) is helping shape our understanding of AI's capabilities.

Janine Julianna Darragh, professor of literacy and English as a second language education, explored the inventive ways educators connect with students in the face of crisis. She shared her expertise in trauma-sensitive teaching, which is applied in schools across the United States and the world.

Kendra Kaiser, director of the [Idaho Water Resources Research Institute](#), showed how collaboration across Idaho is connecting research to water decision makers at all levels.

Engineering Professor John C. Shovic leads a robot-building team of faculty and students on the U of I Coeur d'Alene campus. He presented the case that making mistakes and even breaking things can be powerful learning tools.

Tyler Bland, a professor in the School of Health and Medical Professions, uses games, storytelling and AI to make medical training more engaging and effective. He showed how his award-winning [Medimon](#) program is not only fun and creative, it also helps medical students retain knowledge at a higher level than traditional teaching methods.

U of I [Tribal Law Clinic](#) Director Jessica Millward showcased her work with third-year law students to provide free legal services to tribal citizens, tribal governments and agencies and nonprofits, building student capabilities through experiential learning.

Professor Phil Bass exuded enthusiasm when speaking about the new [Meat Science and Innovation Center](#) at the U of I. He researches meat science, from genetics to dry aging, and discussed how the U of I's role is critical to Idaho's cattle industry.

The event engages the campus community and we also randomly award two scholarships to students who attend.

POP Talks remind us of the tremendous impact U of I research makes across the state and beyond. Even in just a few minutes on stage, our faculty show how they're rising to solve tough challenges through ingenuity and hard work.

Go Vandals!

C. Scott Green
President



Snapshots

U of I agronomist aims to boost mustard yields

Through research at the U of I's Aberdeen Research and Extension Center, agronomist Jared Speckman is leading a project aimed at growing mustard faster and earlier. His research is funded by an award from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and could help Idaho farmers increase their yields while using less water.

[Learn more.](#)

Vandal gains from Hall of Fame experience

U of I student Isabelle Monk gained skills in communications, public speaking and event planning as an intern at the National Baseball Hall of Fame. She rubbed elbows with famous former players, soaked in the experience and presented a research project about women in baseball.

[Learn more.](#)

Small discusses Aquaculture Research Institute's work

On the latest episode of "The Vandal Theory" podcast, professor of fish physiology Brian Small addresses Idaho fisheries and their connection to conservation efforts. His work involves helping Idaho's aquaculture thrive, raising trout in the Magic Valley and supporting the state's caviar industry.

[Learn more.](#)



The U of I's Stillingher Herbarium is the oldest and largest herbarium in Idaho, with approximately 250,000 specimens of plants, algae, lichen and fungi.



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