



Letter from the President

Office of the President, president@uidaho.edu

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Dear Vandals,

This weekend we celebrate more than 600 new members of the University of Idaho alumni family at winter commencement. Their journeys to the graduation stage were filled with hard work, challenges and even adventures, which set them up for future success.

For graduating senior [Shane Neirinckx](#), the U of I experience was all about exploration. He enjoyed time at the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival as a Coeur d'Alene High School student, which exposed him to the U of I campus. He joined the Vandal Marching Band and along with his political science and international studies courses, he studied Japanese.

Mentored by Instructor of Japanese Azusa Tojo, Neirinckx took a lead role on a class project translating testimonies from World War II survivors that were broadcast on a Hiroshima TV station. Thanks to funding from a prestigious Boren Scholarship, he spent the 2024-25 school year in Japan, immersing himself in Asian culture while earning his U of I degree. After graduation, Neirinckx will work in national security for the federal government, using the language and culture skills he gained as an undergraduate.

"I was always interested in that kind of work, I just didn't know how to get there," he said. "The opportunities I accepted at University of Idaho — and there were so many — that I am really grateful for, made this happen for me."

In the College of Science, Sierra Keele jumped into research on infant immune development with Clinical Assistant Professor of Immunology Bethaney Fehrenkamp. She served as a Supplemental Instruction Peer-Assisted Study Session leader for anatomy and physiology and a Moscow Mentor for elementary students in town. Originally from Cataldo, Keele plans to attend medical school and eventually work in Idaho as a physician.

Hadley Beechinor, from Walla Walla, Washington, conducted research on the impact of avian influenza on egg prices as an undergrad in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS). She served as a CALS ambassador and held numerous leadership positions on campus. Beechinor is headed into the commodity risk management and trading field and plans to remain active in livestock production.

Inspired by her late friend Bella Oscarson, who was killed fighting fires last summer, Molly Madden is earning her bachelor's

degree in forestry. The Orotino native plans to work in forestry and write children's books to carry on Oscarson's legacy of educating children about the dangers of fire.

As a doctoral student in the College of Education, Health and Human Sciences, [Lorenzo Rene](#) published four articles focused on student mental health and wellbeing. He is also the first U of I student to earn the Dual Credit Instructor Certificate. Originally from Florida, Rene finished his degree in just two years and plans to return to teaching at the high school level.

The unmatched student experience sets the U of I apart from other institutions. Guided by faculty who are at the top of their fields, students explore their interests and map out their futures. The result is graduates headed toward rewarding careers and fulfilling lives.

Join me in celebrating our newest members of the Vandal alumni family as they set out to make an impact in a wide variety of fields across our state, our country and the world.

Go Vandals!

C. Scott Green
President



Snapshots

Calder School students learn about local job prospects

A U of I-led program called Rooted in the St. Joe is providing students the chance to learn about forestry-related careers. The College of Natural Resources teams up with UI Extension to offer the program at the Calder School, one of the smallest public schools in the state.

[Learn more.](#)

UI Extension program helps preserve Idaho farms

Idaho farmers are mapping out the future of their operations thanks to a UI Extension program. Succession planning can be awkward and exhaustive, but the U of I's succession planning team helps with communication and decision making with experts who specialize in small farm planning.

[Learn more.](#)

Alumni Relations hosting Vandal hockey nights

U of I Alumni Relations is partnering with minor league hockey teams in Idaho Falls, Boise and Spokane for Vandal Nights this winter. Tickets are now available for the Idaho Falls Spud Kings (Dec. 19), Idaho Steelheads (Feb. 4) and Spokane Chiefs (Feb. 20).

[Learn more.](#)



Vandal football player Caleb Ricks was named to the FCS Football Central Freshman All-American team. Ricks is a defensive back from Gonzales, Louisiana.



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