



Letter from the President

Office of the President, president@uidaho.edu

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Dear Vandals,

The University of Idaho continues to thrive in student recruitment, welcoming the second-largest freshman class in our history this fall. Programs like Vandals First are key to helping new students adjust to the demands of college life and navigate challenges both in and out of the classroom.

Savannah Muse is one of a growing number of nontraditional students pursuing higher education. According to national data from the Manhattan Institute, most college students in the U.S. no longer come directly from high school. Many juggle jobs, family responsibilities and academic commitments.

Muse graduated high school at 17 and spent several years working in retail before a family friend encouraged her to pursue a mechanical engineering degree at the U of I. As a first-generation student returning to the classroom after nearly five years, she faced moments of doubt. But with the support of the Vandals First program, she found her footing.

"They encouraged me to treat school like a 9-to-5 job, and I really adopted that idea," said Muse, who grew up in Moscow. "The staff in Vandals First just want to see students succeed, and they've helped me tremendously. Jesse Martinez (Vandals First director) made it his personal mission to help me secure as much financial aid as possible. They gave me the foundation for success."

The [Vandals First Office](#) offers a wide range of support services for first-generation students — or any Vandal who could use a little extra help. From mentoring and academic advising to workshops on financial aid, time management, career planning and mental health, Vandals First equips students with the tools to overcome even the toughest challenges.

Lala Rascon arrived on campus in August with her thoughts often back home in Burley, where her father was facing serious health issues. When he was hospitalized in September, she returned home briefly. Since coming back to Moscow, Rascon has leaned on the Vandals First community. She's thriving as a medical sciences major and has found connection through her mentors and residence hall activities at the Wallace Complex.

"There are always going to be people here at the U of I to help you, even when the problem is really big," Rascon said. "The Vandals First staff made sure I was on task and involved in their programs. I've gotten a lot of good advice, and I feel very comfortable here now."

Thanks in part to programs like Vandals First, overall enrollment at the U of I increased by 3% this fall — even with a decline in international student numbers due to changes in visa policies. The number of continuing students rose by 4.5% compared to fall 2024.

We remain committed to recruiting outstanding Idaho students, and our growing retention rates show that our support systems are working. We're proud to help students overcome obstacles, achieve their goals and uplift their families and communities.

Go Vandals!

C. Scott Green
President



Snapshots

Undergrad explores method to reuse phosphorus

Using a gelatinous hydrogel, U of I junior Madi Gilster is exploring ways to extract phosphorus from water. Her research could help recycle environmental phosphorus, which is especially prevalent in the Snake River of southern Idaho, where Gilster grew up.

[Learn more.](#)

Architecture student uses AI as teaching tool

Using composite images generated by AI, Arisha Alizadeh Moghadam is helping architecture students engage with architectural history. Moghadam took on the project through the Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship program and presented his findings at the Idaho Conference on Undergraduate Research last July.

[Learn more.](#)

Potatoes USA brings international chefs to Parma

The Idaho Center for Plant and Soil Health in Parma recently hosted 31 chefs from around the world as part of a reverse trade mission organized by Potatoes USA. The event showcased how the U of I's cutting-edge research contributes to the state's famous potato quality.

[Learn more.](#)



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