

UIAA DIRECTORS IN IDAHO PROFILES

Troy Braga '02, Northern Idaho

Degree/Major(s): Finance and Human Resources

Hometown: Gooding, Idaho

Favorite class: Statistics. My first introduction to that subject was a bit overwhelming, but through a great teacher (Dacey), I came to love it and it turned me in a direction for the rest of my time at Idaho that has led me to a very rewarding career. A very close second was my time in the Davis Investment Group even though that technically was not a class.

Why U of I: Mainly by opening my eyes to opportunities I never knew much about. Being from a very small town, my view of the world was fairly narrow and my time at Idaho opened doors for me that I didn't even know existed.

Why I serve: "I have a deep appreciation for what my time in Moscow did for me and this seemed like a great opportunity to get involved giving back."

Favorite faculty or staff: Hands-down, Mario Reyes. Mario was a huge advocate for not only my education, but also in helping me manage my time balancing IBC and playing basketball for Idaho. Without his encouragement and support, I never would have decided to join the team as a walk-on. He was the ultimate student advocate and I still keep in touch with him for his advice and friendship.

Favorite Vandal memory: Davis Group trip to Chicago with Mario. Being a faithful Vandal even through plenty of tough years in athletics. Taking my kids to campus on fall weekends and always visiting the Fiji house, hello walk and other favorites, as well as telling them the same stories so many times they know what's coming before I even start!



Mil DeSilva '09, Western Idaho**Degree/Major(s):** Food Science and Nutrition**Hometown:** Meridian, Idaho**Favorite class:** Studying biochemistry provided me with a profound grasp of both macroscopic and microscopic systems. I actively apply those insights to enhance my understanding of healthcare.**Why U of I:** University of Idaho offers an exceptional university experience. However, it's more than just academics; it's about embracing the spirit of being a Vandal. As University of Idaho Vandals, we embody fierce competitiveness, independent thinking, and a drive to make a lasting impact.**Why I serve:** There exist myriad compelling reasons to embrace the Vandal spirit, and each generation deserves to personally encounter these motivations. As for our current and future alumni, their achievements and contributions merit wholehearted celebration. Being a Vandal isn't just about the past; it's about the present and the future we collectively build.**Favorite Vandal memory:** During my senior year at the Perch apartments, I made a seemingly innocuous decision: I bought Rock Band. Little did I realize that this simple purchase would transform into a cascade of unforgettable CJ's post parties, where friends would gather to revel in rhythm, unleash their inner rock stars and create cherished memories. Each note resonated with laughter, and the sheer joy of being together. We found ourselves immersed in a harmonious blend of music and friendship.**Lisa Donnellon '05, Western Idaho****Degree/Major(s):** B.S. Public Relations**Hometown:** Lewiston, Idaho**Favorite class:** I love all my Public Relations classes! Any opportunity to present or give a speech!**Why U of I:** U of I taught me to be driven and dedicated. My degree allowed me to advance my career quickly by using my communication skills. I am very outgoing with a positive attitude which allows me to be comfortable presenting and speaking to large or small audiences.**Why I serve:** I loved my time at U of I! When a Vandal meets another Vandal, I feel like there is an instant connection! Being involved with the Alumni Association to ensure others feel the same way and continue to remain engaged in university activities. The opportunity to be involved with U of I after college is a way to give back to a special place I called home for four years.

Favorite faculty or staff: Sue Heinz. She was my PR professor for several classes. She encouraged me to try new things and take risks. She was very supportive and always shared great insights.

Favorite Vandal memory: I recently reconnected with 15 of my fellow Vandal friends. We have been sharing photos and reliving many memories from our time at University of Idaho. It was so fun! I want everyone that comradery and community.

Chris Haener '89, Central Idaho

Degree/major (s): B.S. Theatre Arts

Favorite or most rewarding class? One of my favorite classes was Canoeing and Camping with Chuck Thompson. It was an elective and an opportunity for several friends and me to do something completely different. One of our tasks was to practice the art of setting up tents on the lawn by Memorial Gym while our final consisted of an overnight camp trip on the Snake River where we learned how to make tin foil dinners and tell ghost stories by firelight. On our last day of the trip, we canoed the mighty Snake and mastered a few rapids along the way. It's one of those experiences my friends and I remember and laugh about regularly.



How did U of I prepare you for your career/life after college? University of Idaho opened my eyes to new ideas and perspectives beyond the small town where I grew up. Attending small classes allowed me to learn by doing. Involving myself in clubs and theater arts productions helped me grow. Living in a sorority, I learned how to communicate and build relationships. My college friends are still my lifelong friends and that community has been invaluable to me in my career and personal life for 40 years.

Why do you choose to serve the Alumni Association? I believe in the importance of maintaining a strong alumni connection with our university. Serving with the Alumni Association board allows me to give back and also grow that connection with others. Being a part of the Vandal family is special and I want others to have that same experience.

What faculty or staff member was integral to your time at U of I? Bruce Brockman was a faculty member and department chair in the Theatre Arts department while I was a student. Bruce was engaging, creative and hard working. He went out of his way to give us what we needed in terms of resources and learning experiences. He also created the stage management program in our department that became my area of emphasis, so I am forever grateful that he made something happen that I benefited from.

Share a treasured Vandal memory, either from when you were a student, or after graduating. It's too hard to pick just one. Attending football games and watching the Vandals beat the Broncos, pledge sneaks with my sorority sisters, Hello Walk with my future husband, finishing my last final before Christmas break and strolling through campus in the fall as an alumni. Special times.

Sharee Hamilton '02, Southern Idaho

Degree/Major(s): Spanish with an Emphasis in Business

Hometown: Idaho Falls, Idaho



Why I serve: I am proud to be a Vandal and I'm excited to be able to give back to university and our Vandal family. Serving on this board allows me to help grow the connection between Vandal alumni and our alma mater.

Favorite class: My major included a mix of Spanish and business classes, both of which I loved! I was able to go on exchange during my junior year and took business classes in Italy and Spanish classes in Costa Rica. That experience solidified my interest in meeting people from different cultural backgrounds and my love of travel.

Why U of I: U of I prepared me for life after college by exposing me to experiences and opportunities I wouldn't have had otherwise. As a first-generation college student, I wasn't sure what to expect when I moved from Idaho Falls to Moscow. When I look back on my years at U of I, I couldn't be more thankful for the incredible personal and professional growth experiences I had!

Favorite faculty or staff: I met Jack Brown through my husband when he was a grad student in Jack's Plant Science program. It was then that I realized I missed out on getting to know more of my professors on a personal level. Jack always took the time to get to know his students personally and pushed them to take advantage of opportunities that would make them well-qualified graduates. I am thankful that we still keep in touch!

Favorite Vandal memory: I have so many fond memories of my time at U of I! Life at the Pi Beta Phi house was always eventful, and I treasure the lifelong friendships I made there. Mom's Weekend was incredibly entertaining when my mother and my aunts came to town. And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention lots of great family time at U of I. Including myself, there are fourteen of us cousins who are Vandals, and we love to have a good time cheering on the Vandals at football games!

John Hoyne '96, Western Idaho

Degree/Major(s): Bachelor of General Studies, emphasis in Architecture and Business

Hometown: Aberdeen, Washington



Why U of I: The opportunity to build a network of friends and business connections has provided me numerous opportunities.

Favorite class: It's a toss-up between Business Law and the World of Corporate Business. BLAW 265 was an excellent course, and I appreciated the additional time I spent with Jerry Wegman. The class provided a foundation about contracts, warranties and other legal topics I deal with running a business. James Toomey and the World of Corporate Business was an eye-opening experience. You would attend a lecture and then have either lunch or dinner with the guest speaker. It was an excellent opportunity to interact and learn from business leaders.

Why I serve: When I realized the experiences, friendships and opportunities that I had at University of Idaho, it was a no-brainer to find ways to give back.

Favorite faculty or staff: I was fortunate enough to be involved in the ASUI Student Government and boards and got to meet and work with David Mucci. Dave was a mentor, leader, educator and all-around great person. He would always make time to chat in the hall or give advice about a difficult situation. He is a special person.

Favorite Vandal memory: Spirit Cow at Homecoming and serving as Vandal Booster intern for the Southern Idaho golf tournaments.

Bobby Myers '10, '17, Northern Idaho

Degree/Major(s): Human Resource Management, Marketing; Executive MBA

Hometown: Powell, Wyoming



Why I serve: I choose to serve on the Alumni Association board of directors because it's a rewarding opportunity to give back while being afar. So many great Vandals have helped me along the way, and I want to be that Vandal for somebody else.

Favorite class: Leading Strategic Change. This class became the most rewarding nearly four years after taking it. In the spring of 2022, I referenced the coursework of this class more than when I was enrolled in the EMBA. I relied on the materials as we quickly built an adaptable organization through what seemed like an unknown future. We had to embrace change and create an agile operation that had previously been a working model for decades. I owe keeping our organization intact over the last three years to this class.

Why U of I: U of I prepared me for life after college with its vast alumni network. With so many alumni in Coeur d'Alene that I could reach out to, I quickly realized the opportunities available when I moved here not having a career path that I was passionate about. The support after college has been the most beneficial in my professional career.

Favorite faculty or staff: I had Dan Eveleth as a professor in both my undergraduate and master's programs. His thoughtfulness and intention that he put into his lectures and coursework expanded my view on reasoning before every decision. Everything he put forth to his class had an intention and would always seem to resonate more as the years passed.

Samantha Storms '12, '13, Western Idaho

Degree/Major(s): B.S. Public Relations (Business); M.S. Adult, Organizational Learning and Leadership; G.C. HR Development, Leadership and Counseling

Hometown: Idaho Falls, Idaho



Favorite class: While I ultimately changed my major to public relations, my experience as an international studies student with the Martin Institute left a lasting impression on my college experience. It was an honor to represent University of Idaho as part of the 2010 delegation.

Why U of I: I am thankful for my extracurricular activities. Many of them shaped the person and professional I am today, including serving as ASUI student body vice president and senator, and being a member of both the Homecoming Committee and the Student Alumni Relations Board (SARB). These and other leadership roles are the inspiration behind my current seat on the U of I Alumni Association board of directors.

Why I serve: I have always believed in the importance of giving back to my community. After serving the U of I Alumni Association for nearly a decade while living out of Idaho, hosting and planning alumni events, I am proud to be back in my home state and thankful for my Vandal network stretching far and wide.

Favorite faculty or staff: I have been fortunate to have so many incredible mentors from U of I, many of whom I still turn to for sound advice and friendship today. Their dedication to Vandal students does not go unnoticed and their impact on my life is immeasurable.

Favorite Vandal memory: Homecoming will forever be a special memory for me as both a student and now alumni. Coming back to Moscow always feels like coming home and embodies the true sense of reunion with my Vandal Family and friends.

Aaron Williamson '95, Western Idaho

Degree/major(s): B. S. in Political Science and Economics

Favorite or most rewarding class: Poli Sci 101 made my decision to major in political science.

How did U of I prepare you for your career/life after college? My U of I degree got me into my industry. My fraternity membership got me into leadership.



Why do you choose to serve the Alumni Association? U of I is part of my identity.

What faculty or staff member was integral to your time at U of I? Professor “Ghazi” Gazenfar’s class got me to double major in economics. He and the class gave me confidence.

Share a treasured Vandal memory, either from when you were a student, or after graduating. It was Fall 1991. Metallica’s *Enter Sandman* album had just dropped. Watching a packed house/dance floor – bursting at the seams with partygoers – move to the beat on the song, in perfect unison, at the Delta Sigma Phi house. We’d done it. At that moment we were kings of the world!

Liza Wilson '09, '11, Central Idaho

Degree/Major(s): B.S. in Conservation Social Science, M.S. in Bioregional Planning and Community Design

Hometown: Twin Falls, Idaho

Favorite Vandal memory: Besides meeting my husband at the Fresno State game in 2009, taking my kids to Vandal games and events. Having them experience the energy and camaraderie is the best feeling.



Favorite class: I learned so much from my conservation management and planning course. It introduced me to experiential learning and gave me a passion for strategic planning and working in/with rural communities. I also loved working with Ron Walters solving "wicked" problems. His visionary planning and thinking outside the box opened my mind to a world of possibilities that I would never have dreamed about.

Why U of I: Through my time at U of I, I was allowed time to discover myself and my likes, dislikes and interests; to be independent and build confidence in my knowledge and abilities. Most importantly, I was never sure what path I wanted to take career-wise, but I did know that I wanted a partner-in-crime, and to have a family, so meeting my husband was a huge bonus!

Why I serve: I have a passion for building communities and fostering connections, and Vandals are the best! Serving on the UIAA board is a way that I can support the university that supported me. I would love to be part of inspiring the next generation of Vandals to continue the success of a great university.

Favorite faculty or staff: Nick Sanyal inspired me with his love for teaching and his genuine care and concern for his students to achieve success. His drive for thinking out of the box and developing course work that made real world impacts inspired my whole academic career. Similarly, Ed Krumpke and Stacy Camp, both of whom were on my master's committee, inspired me with their diverse backgrounds and genuine care for the success of their students.

Jessie Baranco, '99, Boise, Idaho

Degree/major(s): B.S. in Public Communications: Advertising

Favorite or most rewarding class? My favorite classes ended up being in the Political Science department — so much so that I added a second minor just to make the most of all the credits I was racking up! One class that really stuck with me was International Politics. I wish I could remember the professor's name because that class left me wanting more! In fact, it inspired me to kick off an MPA program during my last semester, flirting with the idea of diving into politics myself.



How did U of I prepare you for your career/life after college? After four years in Moscow, I came back to Boise a different, enlightened version of myself. Personally, I had learned valuable life skills of collaboration, community, social responsibility and for the first time, really feeling like I had been part of something bigger than myself. Professionally, I walked into the world with creative confidence and a fearless spirit which has served me well over these 25 years.

Why do you choose to serve the Alumni Association? I feel like I'm entering my "next amazing era" with my youngest child about to finish high school (with eyes on U of I!) and my two older daughters already living their own Vandal adventures. Over the years, I've stayed connected through events and even through my work, but serving the Alumni Association board of directors feels like the perfect way to step back into the Vandal family with intention and purpose. I'm excited to share my energy and the skills I've honed while working alongside other passionate contributors to make a real impact.

What faculty or staff member was integral to your time at U of I? Professor Anna Banks. When she was a professor in the School of Communications — now Journalism and Mass Media (JAMM) — I took several of her classes, and she quickly became one of the most memorable parts of my U of I experience. I admired her unique blend of "academia coolness" and the way she sparked thoughtful, engaging discussions in every course. She had a gift for encouraging and supporting her students, and her impact has stuck with me ever since.

Share a treasured Vandal memory, either from when you were a student, or after graduating. Watching my oldest daughter graduate from U of I stands out as an unforgettable moment. The pride I felt seeing her walk across that stage was overwhelming — a perfect blend of love, nostalgia and Vandal spirit. With my second oldest wrapping up her senior year, I can't wait to relive that experience all over again. Hands down, nothing tops that moment.

Eric Billings, '08

Degree/major (s): B.S. Public Relations, Communication Studies
Minor

Hometown: Kadena AFB, Okinawa, Japan and Mountain Home, Idaho

Favorite or most rewarding class? I had many rewarding classes at U of I but my favorite was History of Rock & Roll with James Reid. To be given the opportunity to listen to various genres of rock & roll through the duration of a class period was an absolute dream. My favorite week of the class was when we listened to non-stop B-52s!



How did U of I prepare you for your career/life after college? I owe my entire career to my U of I experience! Not only did college prepare me for full-time work in fundraising but it helped shape the "adult" me. I feel lucky to still have U of I be a big part of my life, post-college.

Why do you choose to serve the Alumni Association? I want to make a difference for my alma mater and the 200,000+ living alumni through the work I do on the Alumni Association board. Whether it's stewarding Vandal teachers who help recruit future vandals, supporting homecoming efforts that remind alumni how special U of I is or working on strengthening strategic initiatives for the university, I feel like I can add a lot to this board and I'm in a good place in life to start giving more of my time. I look forward to seeing what positive influence I can have on my alma mater.

What faculty or staff member was integral to your time at U of I? There are a few "MVPs" I can think of during my time at U of I, including but not limited to: Rebecca Tallent, Kenton Bird, Denise Bennett and Annette Folwell. I still keep in touch with many of them today and consider them to be good friends now. Each of these individuals not only helped me grow as a student, but also kept me honest and weren't afraid to call me out when it was warranted. I can't appreciate them enough for the time they invested in me!

Share a treasured Vandal memory, either from when you were a student, or after graduating. Meeting Patty Duke in one of my JAMM classes was an unforgettable moment, starting a student club (Students for Sensible Drug Policy) and then later becoming an advisor for the very same club, watching the Vandals beat UNLV on my 30th birthday and fundraising for my alma mater for 10 years are all up there for me in some of my best memories!

Lauren Hamilton, '11**Degree/major (s):** BFA Theatre Arts**Hometown:** Boise, ID

Favorite or most rewarding class? Directing with David Lee Painter. David was the chair of the theatre department at the time and his ability to know and understand students and translate complex theatre ideology was amazing. He also made it a point to know each of his students personally and invest in our success. He is one of the reasons I came to UI, because he spent time with me before I enrolled to make sure the department was a good fit for me.



How did U of I prepare you for your career/life after college? U of I was invaluable to teaching me how to be a responsible, contributing member of society. My extra-curriculars, including Greek Life, SARB and other campus activities shaped who I am, taught me valuable leadership skills and taught me how to work with a diverse group of people. I made lifelong friends and was blessed to be a part of a long tradition of U of I students and alumni. Being a Vandal means having a shared language – even if you weren't on campus at the same time.

Why do you choose to serve the Alumni Association? As a former university staff member, I know the valuable contributions alumni can make to their alma mater. I am looking forward to taking my unique expertise of university alumni programming along with organizational management, fundraising and event and program management and applying it to the Alumni Association in an effort to increase alumni engagement and make a lasting impression on current students and alumni as we see them graduate and get ready to take the next steps as Vandal Alumni.

What faculty or staff member was integral to your time at U of I? David Lee Painter, Ann Hoste, Kelly Quinett, Dean Panteja, Carrie Lawrence. The Theater Department faculty was top-notch and prepared me for a successful stint in the theater industry. They treated me as an adult and professional colleague with the goal of being able to be successful in a demanding industry.

Share a treasured Vandal memory, either from when you were a student, or after graduating. I had an amazing time on an Alternate Service Break Trip to Oakland, California, to build houses for Habitat for Humanity. From sleeping on a church floor to exploring San Fransisco, that trip solidified so many friendships, taught us the value of hard work and showed us how important it is to help our communities. It inspired additional service trips where I was able to chaperone students as a staff member.

Andrakay Pluid, '10, '13**Degree/Major (s): B.S. Political Science, JD****Hometown:** Bonners Ferry

Favorite or most rewarding class? My favorite class in undergraduate were my political science classes with Professor William Lund. He was so knowledgeable and really pushed me to think critically. In law school, my favorites were Criminal Procedure and Torts.



How did U of I prepare you for your career/life after college? My education from the U of I has been instrumental in my career and life after college. There is not a day that goes by that I don't apply something I learned from my time at University of Idaho, whether from law school or from life lessons learned in undergrad.

Why do you choose to serve the Alumni Association? I chose to serve on the Alumni Association board to have a positive impact on the experiences of current students and my fellow alumni. The U of I community positively impacts us all, and I am honored to play a part in that.

What faculty or staff member was integral to your time at U of I? Professor Lund in the Political Science department for helping me achieve a "learning stretch." Professors Angelique Eaglewoman and Dale Goble from U of I Law. Both fueled my love of the law through teaching me how to think critically and to interpret and apply the law.

Share a treasured Vandal memory, either from when you were a student, or after graduating. Taking my children to University of Idaho events, especially football games, is one of my most treasured Vandal memories. Giving them a small piece of what I experienced as a student and fueling their love of U of I early in their life brings me so much joy.

David Harrington '93, Central Region**Degree/Major(s):** B.S., Ag Econ with a major in Agribusiness**Hometown:** Melba, Idaho

Why I serve: We moved from southern Idaho to the Coeur d'Alene area in 2019 and have been involved in alumni tailgate activities ever since. Our involvement has been both as attendees and vendors via our mobile food business.



Why U of I: Attending University of Idaho provided me with lifetime friendships. It also allowed me to explore various career opportunities outside of agriculture, my primary background growing up. Participating in organizational activities including FarmHouse fraternity, U of I Ag Econ club, U of I rodeo club, has given me great experiences beyond the classroom. My greatest lesson learned was the value of completing a goal (attaining a degree), regardless of pitfalls and obstacles along the way.

Favorite Vandal memory: Vandal football was and still is my favorite activity. Attending football games and tailgating with fellow students and now fellow alumni gives me the opportunity to connect with old friends as well as make new friends.

Why do you choose to serve the Alumni Association? Sounds like fun, especially now that I live closer to the university. We moved from southern Idaho to the Coeur d'Alene area in 2019 and have been involved in alumni tailgate activities ever since. Our involvement has been both as attendees and vendors via our mobile food business.

Share a treasured Vandal memory, either from when you were a student, or after graduating. Vandal football was and still is my favorite activity. Attending football games and tailgating with fellow students and now fellow alumni gives me the opportunity to connect with old friends as well as make new friends.