

# Annual Report to the State Board of Education 2019

President Chuck Staben | April 17, 2019

## INTRODUCTION



Thank you and welcome to the University of Idaho. I look forward to updating you on U of I progress over the past year.

It has been a great honor to serve as the 18<sup>th</sup> president of this institution. I came into the presidency in 2014 with a belief in the unique power of land-grant universities like the University of Idaho to offer life-changing education, to propel innovation, and to connect with communities.

That belief remains strong because I've seen it in action.

Over the past five years we've redoubled our efforts to bring more students to college, to enhance their experiences while they're here, and to prepare them for a lifetime of success.

Over the past five years we've expanded our research enterprise to address serious issues in Idaho and the world, answer critical questions, and explore solutions to complex problems.

Over the past five years we've enhanced our partnerships with communities to promote health, leadership and economic prosperity.

And over the past five years we've focused on cultivating a diverse, inclusive university community equipped to fulfill its mission for our state and our citizens.



Our success springs from a university-wide commitment on the part of faculty, staff and students.

Today I'll focus on progress over the past year toward strategic goals. But those accomplishments take place in the context of a half decade of forward momentum for the university.

I am confident that the University of Idaho is well-positioned for continued success.

I'll use the framework of our strategic plan for this presentation.

## INNOVATING WITH IMPACT

<h3>INNOVATING RESEARCH &amp; SCHOLARSHIP WITH IMPACT</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increasing annual research expenditures</li><li>Conducting research and scholarship that impacts Idaho, improves lives and spurs new applications</li><li>Connecting research and scholarship with the student experience</li></ul>	<h4>RESEARCH &amp; SCHOLARSHIP</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>\$20 million NSF EPSCoR grant focused on fish genetics, sagebrush</li><li>\$2.6 million from USDE to develop nuclear energy innovations</li><li>\$5 million NIH grants for multiple projects: antibiotic resistance, vaccines, malaria</li><li>Scholarship &amp; creative activity: humanities, arts, social sciences.</li></ul>	
	<h4>FACULTY EXCELLENCE</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>NSF Career Awards: Elizabeth Cassel, Michael Strickland</li><li>George Barley Water Prize finalist &amp; American Academy of Inventors: Greg Moller</li><li>American Association for the Advancement of Science: Janet Nelson</li></ul>	

Each university has a unique role in Idaho – we are the land-grant, public research university for our state, with a mission to conduct basic and applied science that makes an impact for Idaho.

U of I's research enterprise expends \$111 million annually, mostly from federal funding, and includes everything from nuclear energy research, to delivering clean water systems, to agricultural sciences, to humanities and social sciences.

Students, especially undergraduates, are integrated into our research enterprise. Nearly 2/3 of undergraduates have some experience with a research project during their educations.

Rajani Dhingra, pictured on the slide, is a doctoral student who exemplifies the opportunities at U of I. She was recently one of about 30 people – leading scientists from across the U.S. – to be in the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory while the “New Horizons” probe completed its exploration of the object named “Ultima Thule” – the farthest object in our solar system yet explored.

Undergraduates interested in following in Rajani's footsteps in space have opportunities through our NASA Space Grant program.

We've also, during my time as president, built a new Office of Undergraduate Research to coordinate and enhance our opportunities for students.

In 2018, the office funded 70 undergraduate research or scholarly projects and sent numerous students to present their work at national and international conferences.

The office has also worked with faculty to redesign courses to include a significant research component.

Last year our annual university-wide Undergraduate Research Symposium had over 130 student presenters. We anticipate even stronger turnout this year.

Some of our participants have posters in the foyer, and we've invited them to join us for lunch. I hope you'll ask them questions about their project, but also their overall experiences.

## ENGAGING WITH IDAHO



**ENGAGING WITH IDAHO**  
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Delivering Direct Admissions, Next Steps, Durable Admissions
- Promoting Opportunity Scholarships, Vandal Promise
- Executing Vandal Ideas Project: Engage – Caminos al Futuro Project

The University of Idaho, and my presidency, has been focused on the statewide effort to bring more students to postsecondary education.

Several years ago we developed the Direct Admissions program that streamlines college admissions for qualified Idaho high school students. That process change has contributed to a cultural shift in expecting to go to college. That should be the default for Idaho students.

We were the first institution to eliminate application fees for Idaho residents, and are glad that the state has followed suit.

Last fall we initiated “Durable Admissions,” a culturally responsive policy that allows accepted students to defer enrollment not just for one year but for up to four years after admission. This is important for our students who pursue a religious mission or military service.

Increasingly, our attention has focused on cost and affordability. At U of I, 28 percent of freshmen are first-generation college attendees. About 40 percent of students are Pell-eligible, indicating strong financial need. And 72 percent of our freshmen this year are Idaho residents.

For Pell-eligible students, typical unmet financial need is \$5,000 per year. Now: Imagine how many students facing a \$5,000 shortfall simply do not enroll. That’s a loss for Idaho.

A generation ago, a student might make money on a summer job to pay for college. One of our celebrated alumni, SpaceX co-founder Tom Mueller, from St. Maries, Idaho, earned his college money logging in the summer. SpaceX is the company cofounded by Tesla founder Elon Musk, and is reinventing space exploration through reusable rockets – they just had a successful Falcon Heavy rocket launch, for example.

Unfortunately, even a can-do attitude like Tom’s faces a daunting task in 2019. We worry about losing bright minds like Tom Mueller’s – creative, daring people who can change our view of what’s possible, who can build companies and develop technologies that make our lives better.

To help students, we’re proud of our \$25 million in annual institutional aid, although much of that is merit-based and doesn’t address financial need.

We also strongly supported Governor Little's recommendation for a \$7 million increase in Opportunity Scholarship program funding, which will help more Idaho students attend postsecondary education.

We got out ahead of that and communicated to more than 800 qualified prospective Idaho students that they are eligible for Opportunity Scholarship awards, based on a combination of need and merit.

For comparison, last year 300 freshmen with Opportunity Scholarships ultimately came to U of I.

Right now, compared to the end of May 2018, we are up in acceptances by 25 Opportunity Scholarship students.

With more than 500 offers still out, we'll see even greater gains. We estimate going from 300 students with awards to 400 to 450 next year. Being bold, and increasing the need-based allotment, has moved the needle for Idaho students.

We'll complement the state's scholarship with the Vandal Promise initiative, a major donor-supported need-based scholarship campaign.

In Phase One of Vandal Promise, we've asked donors to give \$5,000 per year over five years. More than 40 donors have so far made that investment.

Phase Two of the initiative will roll out this summer, and likely include an endowment to offer long-term sustainability for need-based aid. Having donors send students to college and meet those students is one of the most compelling asks we've ever made.

In addition to process changes and fundraising, we've leveraged our research strengths to get our expertise and manpower working for go-on rate improvement. Our Vandal Ideas Project: Engage initiative created several successful programs to connect young people with opportunities and resources that influence college-going.

The Caminos al Futuro project in Jerome, Idaho, is one such example.

Let me give you a brief story to add context. Michelle Aragon is a U of I graduate, the first in her family to attend college, who has gone on to a top executive position at Magna, a leading New York City advertising firm. She's from Jerome, Idaho. We invited her back to U of I last fall to be our Convocation speaker.

While at U of I, Michelle was a GEM of the Mountains yearbook editor and a member of JAMM's National Student Advertising Competition team.

Michelle shouldn't be an outlier.

The "Caminos al Futuro" program in Jerome embeds support staff in the community, working with middle and high school students, their schools and their parents.

So far all 40 students have persisted in the program.

U of I funded the first year, but a five-year USDA grant has allowed us to sustain and double the size of this program.

I visited Jerome with Michelle last fall to meet with students.

Michelle has a saying, "See it, and you can be it." She's a great example of lifting yourself up from your circumstances – I know the students were struck by her success.

We asked some of the students what they wanted to be; many said pro soccer players. But two students surprised me – they said they wanted to be astronomers, perhaps a reflection of a NASA program last summer.

I'm really touched by that. Those students maybe haven't yet been that far from their hometown. But they're looking at the stars, and seeing a future there for them.

That future runs through higher education, and for them and for students like them, we want to provide all the support we can.

## TRANSFORMING LIVES



The University of Idaho is deeply engaged in improving retention, progression and graduation rates. Our first- to second-year retention rate is above 80% for the second year in a row. Our six-year graduation rate jumped 5% last fall to 59%.

This fall we rolled out our VandalStar data management tool one-stop dashboard for faculty, advisors and other support staff. It allows for more timely interventions with students who may be having issues that would interrupt their education.

We never wanted to just bring students to college, we wanted them to succeed once they are there. We're also providing meaningful experiences that keep students engaged in school and set them up for post-college success.

Our new Fenway Group partnership is a great example. The Fenway Group is a private company we attracted to Moscow that employs students on web development contracts with top-tier companies. Fenway hires project managers who interface with the clients and manage student work groups.

Students get mentorships, real-world experience, a good paycheck, and the connections to gain long-term employment after college.


This program is rapidly scaling up at U of I, and we think it's an excellent model for our somewhat remote location.

We've invited a number of Fenway Group students to join us for lunch this afternoon; please take the opportunity to learn about those experiences.

We'll keep building on our success.



## CULTIVATING CURRENT & FUTURE SUCCESS



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### CULTIVATING

#### A VALUED AND DIVERSE COMMUNITY

- Making strides on market-based compensation
- Countering the trend on international enrollment
- Updating a diversity plan and identifying concrete objectives

An inextricable element of the university's success is our commitment to a diverse, equitable and inclusive community. This has internal and external elements. I'll touch upon a couple highlights of that commitment.

Our salaries and rapid turnover present an internal challenge. We've made progress on market-based compensation, up from 88 percent to 94 percent of target salaries for staff.

The compensation initiative for staff and faculty was funded by board-required Program Prioritization process.

We also brought teaching assistants closer to market wages through the market-based compensation initiative, offering more fairness to that group of people and helping us attract talent to our academic programs.

Hardworking, innovative faculty and staff are the lynchpin of Vandal excellence. We're making progress in our ability to recruit and retain that talent.

Our Global Student Success Center continues to provide a pathway for international students and to diversify Idaho's student experience.

This partnership with Navitas creates a pipeline for students from abroad to engage in a U of I educational experience.

U of I continues to be an appealing option for international students in a time where there has actually been retrenchment nationwide in international enrollment.

These students contribute valuable perspective and cultural traditions to our campus community, in addition to offering important revenue.

This spring we again collaborated on the Women's Leadership Conference with Washington State University, a key component of our broader efforts designed to offer professional development opportunities, empower women and encourage women to achieve their career goals.

Lastly, our Office of Equity and Diversity has been working on a campus diversity plan. We've actually had a plan since 1990, but haven't done that much with it.

Each unit at U of I will develop concrete, actionable goals to improve an aspect of diversity – representational, curricular, or whatever is most important to progress.

For example, the College of Engineering's focus is on bringing women into Engineering, and they've partnered with Micron, the INL, and Idaho Power in that effort.



## FACILITIES FOOTPRINT



**FACILITIES**  
BUILDING OUR FUTURE

- Idaho WWAMI laboratories & classroom space
- Rinker Rock Creek Ranch / Nancy M. Cumming RE&E Center
- Idaho Center for Agriculture, Food & the Environment
- ARI Aquatic Animal Research Facility
- Sandpoint Organic Agriculture Center
- University House
- Idaho Central Credit Union Arena

The University of Idaho, as Idaho's land-grant university, has a statewide presence. Over the past year we've made headway on a number of projects that help us deliver on our mission for education, research and scholarship, and community engagement.

The board approved a \$1.2 million, 99-year lease agreement at Rinker Rock Creek Ranch. The ranch's 10,000 acres offer a unique, living laboratory for hands-on understanding of rangeland resource management, conservation and recreation. It's complemented by 10,000 acres of adjoining BLM land.

In 2018 we celebrated the opening of an anatomy lab and classroom spaces for the Idaho WWAMI public medical education program at a new Gritman Medical Center building in downtown Moscow.

Our renovated facility on Sweet Avenue will open in June; we're planning a ribbon-cutting on June 7.

The Idaho WWAMI cadre has increased over recent years to 40 students per year, with revised curriculum that offers more time in Moscow during the program.

One Idaho WWAMI initiative I hope you've heard about is *Project ECHO Idaho*. This endeavor empowers primary care providers in remote or underserved communities in Idaho to treat issues requiring specialist expertise – opiate abuse and dependency, for instance.

Connecting with a panel of experts in bi-weekly one-hour video conferences, through last fall the program had offered more than 150 providers from nearly 80 sites in three dozen communities a chance to learn tools and techniques in the area of substance abuse and dependency to improve health and even save lives in our communities.

New providers come on board every week – we had one who joined up just two weeks ago after seeing the program mentioned in one of my Friday Letters.

In October 2018, Project ECHO was awarded \$374,919 over three years in federal funding to offer behavioral health trainings for healthcare professionals.

In November 2018 Project ECHO received an Idaho Rural Health Hero award from the Idaho Rural Health Association for its work on behalf of rural Idahoans through opioid addiction treatment and behavioral health education efforts. We're excited about the accomplishments so far for this program.

Other facilities include a new Aquaculture Research Institute facility in Moscow; a new classroom and community building at the Nancy M. Cumming Research, Education and Extension Center in Carmen; and our University House facility here on campus.

We've also established the new Sandpoint Organic Agriculture Center and taken a step forward with the approval of land acquisition for the Idaho Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment. Each facility makes a valuable contribution to an area of Vandal excellence and of critical need for the state – its students, its industries, and its communities.

Lastly, a facility that has drawn a lot of attention, the Idaho Central Credit Union Arena, approved in March, is an investment in our campus community – our student-athletes, our students and faculty who will use the building for important events, and our alumni and friends who will see the building as a gathering place.

We're getting support from wood and associated industries, and expect the facility to spur development in those areas.

The unique, wood construction of the facility is also engaging our academic community, offering classroom connections in areas such as engineering, natural resources and architecture. We've already had a class in civil engineering, for example.

In the foyer, you can see posters that Architecture students made as part of the annual Idaho Forest Products Commission design competition.

These projects center on design concepts for the expansion of the Palouse Ice Rink here in Moscow. Students use Idaho wood in a sustainable, innovative way. They learn the whole life cycle of the material they're using, managed at our Experimental Forest, they do a site analysis to see user engagement with the space, and they go to the Idaho Forest Group mill see how the wood is made into timber.

It's a comprehensive project, with beautiful results, as you can see.

THANK YOU



I hope this presentation gives you a useful overview of U of I's progress across our mission.

It has been an honor to lead this institution and to see it succeed across key measures.

As I've said, those accomplishments are the work of many, from the state board, to our faculty, to our hardworking staff, to our highly engaged alumni, our partners in the community, and countless other friends.

Thank you for your support of the University of Idaho. With your continued guidance, I know the university is well-positioned for continued success.