



Letter from the

President

Office of the President, president@uidaho.edu

February 3, 2023

Dear Vandals,

The University of Idaho prides itself on offering unprecedented research opportunities for undergraduates. Samantha Smith and Simon Salisbury are getting their hands dirty with U of I research, and they're still in high school.

The two Moscow High students were National Winners of the FFA Agriscience Fair in Animal Systems. Their project, "Examining the Effects of Travel and Gold Dust Feed Supplement on Weight in Sheep" took the top prize in Division 4, beating out freshman and sophomore teams from all 52 state FFA associations.

"Probably the most valuable thing we learned is that Gold Dust (a mix of electrolytes and protein) does work," Salisbury said. "I think when we started we just wanted to meet the requirements for the research, but then we did get really involved with it. Everyone at the U of I was really helpful and welcoming to us."

Funded by a mini grant from the U.S. Department of

Agriculture, Samantha and Simon worked with professor Jeremy Falk and U of I Sheep Center Manager Dino Vinci on the project. It's just one example of the many opportunities FFA provides, not just for future farmers, but for students interested in many ag-related careers.

"The FFA program is really about career success within agriculture," Falk said. "It prepares students to become the problem solvers and creative thinkers around all aspects of food, fiber and natural resources."

Moscow's is one of 94 FFA programs across the state. The U of I educates the vast majority of high school agriculture educators. Every ag education teacher in Idaho is also an FFA advisor and students must be enrolled in the ag education program to participate in FFA.

Students learn in the classroom, through supervised work-based learning and by attending FFA events where they can gain experience and test their knowledge and skills in food science, public speaking, research and leadership.

"The conventions really remove the ceiling and allow them to compete against students from other schools, other districts and even other states," Falk said.

Idaho industry recognizes the great need for FFA programs to develop future leaders in the state. But for every 1,255 Idaho high school students, there is just one FFA advisor. And several large schools across the state have no FFA offerings. There are about 65 students in the U of I's ag education program currently, but Falk said Idaho will need to produce more teachers to meet the growing population's demand.

"There isn't a shortage of teachers because of retirement or people leaving FFA programs, it's just that the growth curve has been so sharp," he said. "This program really gives back

to the communities they're in and FFA has an impact at the state level. By combining in-class and out-of-class experiences, it allows students to really take off and really explore all of the opportunities in agriculture."

This year, Idaho FFA launched its first virtual chapter and introduced its first private school chapter. U of I's expertise in this unique area and driven students like Samantha and Simon leave Falk hopeful for the future of ag education in the state.

"I think going to state and going to nationals and hearing what people had to say, I learned there are not a lot of people willing to be farmers," said Salisbury. "It really made me want to pursue (agriculture) as a career — either owning a farm or working in research."

Go Vandals!

C. Scott Green
President



Snapshots

Red carpet premier of The College Tour Saturday

The U of I is hosting a red carpet viewing event of the Amazon Prime series "The College Tour" at 5 p.m. tomorrow, Feb. 4 at

the Kenworthy Performing Arts Centre in Moscow. The showing of the U of I's episode will be followed by a Q&A session with students featured in the program. [Learn more.](#)

U of I doctoral student joins otter conservation efforts

Manuel Santiago is utilizing the U of I's modern genetic monitoring tools to understand neotropical otters and help protect the elusive species. The U of I doctoral student works alongside professor Lisette Waits in the College of Natural Resources. [Learn more.](#)

Jazz festival readies for ICCU Arena debut

The Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival is changing venues and dates to better accommodate students and jazz fans coming to Moscow. The Festival will be held April 19-22 with the main concerts in ICCU Arena, which opened in 2021. [Learn more.](#)



The U of I men's tennis team hosted its first home match in seven years on Sunday, defeating Seattle 6-1 in the Kibbie Dome. The Vandals are the defending Big Sky Conference champions.



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