



**Letter from the**

# President

Office of the President, [president@uidaho.edu](mailto:president@uidaho.edu)

**March 17, 2023**

Dear Vandals,

Nick Stoppello and Pat Churchman have had no trouble creating a buzz with their new business, Flashpoint Building Systems. The University of Idaho graduates teamed up to create an innovative blueprint engraving system designed to greatly improve quality and efficiency in wood-frame construction.

Short on time and capital, they turned to the U of I to help definitively determine how their process might impact the performance of the building materials in question. The U of I's Renewable Materials Laboratory in Moscow confirmed the integrity of the wood products treated with Flashpoint's patent-pending blueprint etchings, which has allowed their company to take the next step towards commercialization.

"Manufactured wood products represent a multibillion-dollar industry and require extensive testing to meet code and performance requirements, so the barrier to entry for products like ours is extremely high," said Churchman, who earned his

bachelor's and master's degrees in architecture from the U of I. "The testing alone could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, so assistance from the University of Idaho has been vital in our ability to make progress towards taking this product to market."

The U of I helped the business over a major hurdle. Professor Armando McDonald oversaw the testing for water absorption and linear expansion, a service the Renewable Materials Laboratory provides for many Idaho businesses each year. With a thumbs up from the U of I testers, Stoppello and Churchman are excited to take their business to the next level.

"The manufacturers want to know the impact of burning and altering the products," Stoppello said. "They want to make sure they are not weakening the product or causing potential warranty issues. The report (from the U of I) was that the etching had negligible effect on the product. We had a suspicion that was the case, but it was critical to have a third party confirm it."

Stoppello and Churchman both worked in the construction industry and the longtime friends began meeting in 2018 to do more than just commiserate about the issues they were facing on the jobsite. They came up with the idea of transferring building plans from paper to the actual building materials themselves, using laser etching technology to place the plans directly on the subflooring at scale.

Stoppello, who earned his bachelor's degree in production and operations management from the U of I, said their patent-pending invention addresses a common communication breakdown between architects' plans and professionals on the job site. "There are a myriad of tools, applications and technology rolled out to help in the construction process, but they're typically aimed at the designer side of things," Stoppello said. "There are not many solutions for

tradespeople to help them be more efficient and effective. We identified the building plans as a pinch point, and our solution brings the paper plans to real life, at scale. It gives the builders the ability to precisely locate where things go. The product is rooted in doing things right the first time."

In 2021, Stoppello and Churchman's pitch captivated the judges at the Hacking for Homebuilding challenge at Boise Entrepreneur Week, the outcome being a first place finish for Flashpoint Building Systems and a \$10,000 top prize. Following the challenge, they partnered with Franklin Building Supply in Boise where they relocated their operation in Spring 2022. They have provided their Integrated Layout System for over 100 homes for local contractors, as well as one of the nation's largest production home builders.

With the assistance of the U of I, Flashpoint is now able to begin the process of expanding its business with the vision of becoming a nationally recognized organization. And you can bet they will be shouting "Go Vandals" every chance they get along the way.

**Go Vandals!**

**C. Scott Green**  
**President**



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# Snapshots

## WWAMI students train for rural health care

A group of 25 students in the U of I's WWAMI program took a course in rural medical care conducted by alumnus Andrew Schweitzer. The course took place in Cottonwood and presented scenarios that the future doctors might face in underserved areas such as rural Idaho. [Learn more.](#)

## Master's student explores decline in moose populations

U of I graduate student Eric Van Beek is gathering data on the prevalence of winter ticks and documenting calf mortality as part of a study funded by Idaho Fish and Game. Tick infestations are impacting moose populations, according to the research conducted by Van Beek and others in professor Janet Rachlow's lab. [Learn more.](#)

## Suaste steps into leadership roles to inspire her community

Junior Natalie Suaste found a strong support network through the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) at the U of I, and now she's leading others in her community. Active in student government, her sorority and as a college ambassador, Suaste hopes to inspire other Latinx students in her hometown of Jerome. [Learn more.](#)



The movie "The Whale," which writer Samuel D. Hunter adapted for the big screen from the play by the same name, was set in Moscow, where Hunter attended high school.



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University of Idaho  
875 Perimeter Drive  
Moscow, ID 83844  
[info@uidaho.edu](mailto:info@uidaho.edu)

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