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Letter from the President

January 13, 2023

Dear Vandals,

Thanks to sound investment in our research infrastructure and hard work by our faculty and staff, we're closing in on our goal of R1 classification and already reaping the benefits of larger and more collaborative grant dollars to provide answers to Idaho's industries.

Our partnership with a private utility management company to oversee the university's steam plant (P3) provides funds that we're reinvesting in key areas, including our research enterprise. Almost $12 million is committed through 2024 to increasing research capacity and support for doctoral students, growing research expenditures and incenting external research funding. Nearly 80 doctoral students, postdoctoral positions and

staff scientists have already joined the U of I over the past two years.

In the College of Science, the Computational One Health initiative brought on four data scientists, with another on the way, using P3 funding. As part of One Health, the researchers use data to model and forecast health outcomes, specifically from animal-borne diseases.

“The health of people is often directly related to the health of animals and the environment,” said Barrie Robinson, director of the Institute for Interdisciplinary Data Sciences, which oversees One Health. “Using computational simulations and publicly available large data sets, we can forecast scenarios or even find solutions to health challenges.”

In addition to their work with One Health, the U of I data scientists are also available to tackle research projects from other colleges and departments. They recently gained access to the Falcon supercomputer, which the U of I now manages after Idaho National Laboratory transferred it last year. The Falcon is the 12th fastest computer at any of the nation’s universities and allows researchers to run simulations and analyses 10 times faster than previously possible.

In the College of Natural Resources, P3 funding allows Professor Tara Hudiburg to bring in highly qualified postdoctoral staff to assist with research and expand the scope of her work.

“They increase the depth and breadth of what I can do, and what we can apply for,” Hudiburg said. “These postdocs bring skillsets that I don’t have. They’ve given me a lot of latitude and they’ve multiplied my efforts.”

Hudiburg is currently wrapping up a proposal for a $160 million grant from the National Science Foundation, which would

combine the efforts of higher ed, public, private and tribal partners to forge self-sustaining economies in the Northwest. With the help of her postdocs, Hudiburg held forums in communities throughout the region last year and she hopes to get positive news regarding her FIERCE proposal later this year.

U of I research delivers returns any investor would envy. An initial $10 million state appropriation for the Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment helped set the stage for last year's $18.9 million grant for our Deep Soil Ecotron Laboratory, which in turn boosted our credentials to win the Climate-Smart Agriculture grant worth up to $55 million.

These high-profile projects also attract faculty and researchers, who carry on the virtuous cycle. Idaho's industries benefit by the research findings that increase yields, improve water quality and reduce carbon emissions.

We're already punching well above our weight in gaining research grants and we'll improve our starting position in the competition for grant dollars by reaching R1 status. The vast majority of federal research dollars are awarded to the 131 universities in the R1 tier. Idaho deserves this kind of research response from its land-grant university.

Our ultimate goal of R1 classification is within reach. We look forward to building on our expertise and enhancing our ability to serve our state.

Go Vandals!

C. Scott Green

President

Snapshots

Life experience opens up career path for Riehm

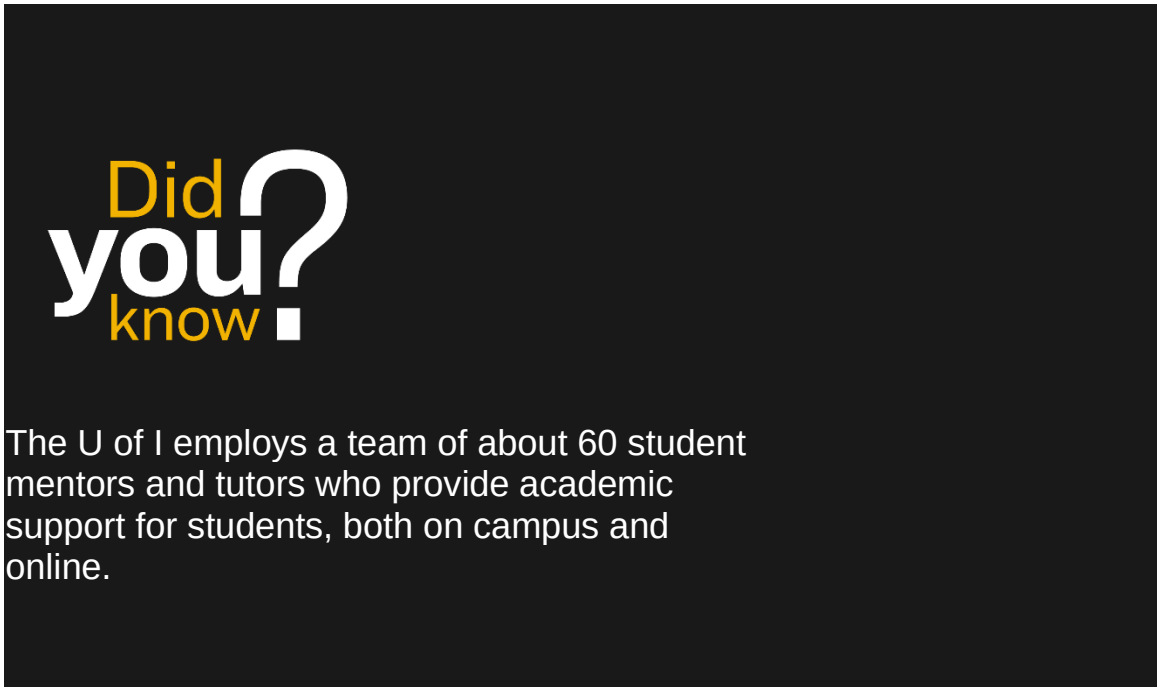
Bex Riehm took an unconventional route to the U of I, but she's thrived as a nontraditional student. Riehm will graduate in the spring with degrees in criminology and psychology and already has a job waiting for her with the Portland Police Department. Learn more.

Orofino graduate soaring through field research

U of I sophomore Annie Vaage studied owl territories and nesting habits in southeastern Arizona as part of her Doris Duke conservation scholarship experience. Vaage is studying wildlife sciences in the College of Natural Resources and the Orofino High School graduate was part of a team that used large grids to map owl nests and potential nesting sites. Learn more.

Dykstra: creativity vital in life and in law

Professor Jason Dykstra practices what he preaches, playing in a band and pursuing a wide variety of professional outlets. He emphasizes the importance of creativity to life and to the study of law in the latest Vandal Theory podcast. Learn more.



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