



Letter from the

President

Office of the President, president@uidaho.edu

April 4, 2025

Dear Vandals,

The University of Idaho's expertise in areas like agriculture, forestry, engineering and law is well known. Barrie Robison believes we could soon add artificial intelligence to that list.

The director of the U of I's Institute for Interdisciplinary Data Sciences (IIDS) and professor in the College of Science said he regularly meets with employees from research universities around the country to discuss how they can improve their operations through the use of AI.

"When we talk to them, they're blown away at the things we're doing," Robison said. "We've met with colleagues from Penn State, University of Illinois, University of Colorado and others, and we are out in front when it comes to the intersection of generative AI and knowledge-type work. We're punching above our weight in terms of making stuff that works."

The National Science Foundation endorsed the U of I's expertise in AI earlier this year when it awarded a [\\$4.5 million grant](#) designed to streamline administrative processes and drive efficiency in research management on campus. By improving these processes, the NSF grant could boost the research enterprise by streamlining grant paperwork and encouraging broader participation across the university. Sarah Martonick, director of the Office of Sponsored Programs, is the principle investigator on the grant.

The Office of Research and Economic Development began investing financially in AI solutions more than two years ago. Robison said the tools developed at the U of I have proven to be reliable and effective in processing research grants and supporting researchers.

"We have created systems and tested them so that we get the same results every time," said Robison, who recently expounded on the U of I's work in AI on "[The Vandal Theory podcast](#)". "They're secure — we use hardware that's on campus, and everything is reproducible and accurate."

In addition to improving efficiency and effectiveness in administrative processes, IIDS helps faculty members use AI to address challenges in teaching and research. Miranda Wilson, professor of cello, [tackled the translation](#) of an old German cello instructional book by using AI. Rather than hiring an expert to decipher the specialized cello terminology and quirks of old German, the use of AI produced an accurate translation while saving significant time and resources. Computer science Professor Boyu Zhang researches how large language models might help medical professionals diagnose injury and illness.

The latest cohort of faculty members working with IIDS features professors from five colleges and the U of I Library, all working on unique projects that leverage AI. And internships in AI and data science allow graduate students to use the university's resources for cutting-edge work.

The U of I's early commitment to exploring AI tools and technology continues to pay dividends as we carry out our mission to develop and distribute knowledge for the benefit of our students and our state.

Go Vandals!

C. Scott Green
President

