

2024 - 2025

THE ALUMNI MAGAZINE OF THE COLLEGE OF IDAHO

# QUEST



## FRONT COVER IMAGE:

Jackson Nassir's monumental art installation at The College of Idaho's Cruzen-Murray Library offers a poignant exploration of life's fragility and beauty, inviting viewers to journey through a transformative narrative of growth, loss, and transcendence.

## FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO



DOUG BRIGHAM '87, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,  
& DAVID DOUGLASS, PRESIDENT

These are exciting times at The College of Idaho!

First, in early March, we announced that David Douglass would be promoted to the role of President and I would move into the Chief Executive Officer role. David is a powerhouse in higher ed and has been the leader of our task force that is driving the implementation of our new undergraduate curriculum and tagline "Do More in Four." More importantly, in his eight years here, he has grown to love the College and our students and is a teambuilder with a tireless work ethic. I can't wait for all of you to meet David. As for me, I'm not going anywhere. This change will allow me to focus my energy more externally, particularly in the area of fundraising.

Second, I am excited to continue the roll-out of "Do More in Four." We discuss it in more detail in the following pages, but it puts us ahead of most of the market in terms of offering incoming students an opportunity to earn an undergraduate and master's degree in four years while also opening up every Friday to allow students to focus on high impact activities: internships, research, service, outdoor programs, etc. To help make this possible, we are launching two master's programs this coming fall: a Master of Organizational Leadership and a Master of Applied Public Policy (with more to follow).

Next, how about our athletic success. In mid-March, Coach Colby Blaine led the men's basketball team to its second national championship in three years. This comes on the heels of national championships from Coach Dominic Bolin for both our women's and men's cross-country teams in the past two years. These teams aren't just good in athletic competition, they're good in the classroom too. Senior Drew Wyman was named First Team Academic All-American!

Finally, thanks to many of you, our Annual Scholarship Gala raised a new record amount, \$1.35 million. Thank you for the support of our students!

*Doug Brigham*





04

## ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

Do More in Four; Introducing a 3+1 Degree; The College Launches Idaho's Only Public Policy Master's Degree; The College Partners with the American College of Lifestyle Medicine; and Building Succession Plans for Idaho's Public Education System

08

## STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

Emma Redman; Jackson Nassir; Nathan Badger at Gull Island; Students Honored for Brain-Tumor Research; Students Step Out of Their Comfort Zones; and Celebrating Culture

12

## FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

Raptosh Weaves a Web of Intersecting Traumas; Posen Recognized by the Society for Music Theory; Rochelle Johnson's Award-Winning Essay "Phantom Pains"; and Retiring Faculty

14

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Spreadsheets & Sequins: The Double Life of Shealene Zitny

15

## DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Scholarship Gala Raises \$1.35 Million

16

## ATHLETICS FEATURES

Wyman's Legacy of Excellence: On the Court, In the Classroom, and Beyond; Back-to-Back Glory: Coach Dom Bolin Leads Yotes to Second National Title; and Elgin Baylor Arena: Honoring a Trailblazer and Empowering Future Generations

18

## CLASS NOTES

19

## UPCOMING EVENTS



## MAPP: MASTER OF APPLIED PUBLIC POLICY



## EMMA REDMAN: TRUMAN SCHOLARSHIP FINALIST



## DIANE RAPTOSH, AUTHOR OF *I ERIC AMERICA*

The College expresses its great thanks to Jeannine Mars '77 for her contributions as an editor and to Alan Minskoff, senior lecturer of communication arts, and his journalism students for serving as contributing writers for this issue of our Quest magazine.



## DO MORE IN FOUR

### A NEW ERA AT THE COLLEGE OF IDAHO

**ANDREW GADES, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND INTERIM DEAN OF THE UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE, WITH CHRISTINE SCHUTZ, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND CHAIR OF THE UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM COUNCIL, AND NICOLE CAMMANN '14, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF ACADEMIC SUPPORT, RESPOND TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEW CURRICULUM AND DISCUSS HOW THESE CHANGES BETTER PREPARE STUDENTS FOR LIFE AFTER COLLEGE.**

As The College of Idaho has consistently done throughout its history, it has once again reassessed its curriculum, continuing its tradition of innovation and commitment to nurturing critical thinking, creativity, and civic engagement – hallmarks of a liberal arts education. This fall, the College unveils its new curriculum, which incorporates the following five innovations unique to the State of Idaho.

**4 COURSES** – The new curriculum is constructed of fewer, deeper, and richer courses. Every other college/university in Idaho requires students to take five courses each semester, roughly 42 courses altogether, to achieve the 124 credits required to earn a bachelor's degree. The College's courses count for more—four credits rather than three—so students need take only four courses each semester, and only 31 courses are needed to reach graduation. At the College, students are able to dwell on their learning without rushing to the next class as often as other schools require.

**FOCUSED FRIDAYS** – The efficiency of the College's new curriculum means that all of its courses can fit into a four-day school week, leaving Fridays filled with opportunities ranging from practicing music, foreign language, and art; to working on collaborative research projects or on projects with classmates; to decreasing the financial burden of college through work-study or off-campus positions; to competing in athletics; to preparing for a post-graduate position through internships, research, or job shadowing.

**COYOTE CORE** – Studying at the College is about more than just a student's major, and therefore with its Coyote Core requirements, the new curriculum embraces the liberal arts tradition of exploring diverse disciplines. Students will participate in a first-year seminar and a civilization course as part of a learning community as well as take courses focused on creative expression, human behavior, scientific reasoning, and quantitative analysis. Additionally, through its "Career, Calling & Community" requirement, students will apply

academic skills in real-world contexts through internships, study abroad, research, applied learning, and community engagement.

**CAREER SECTORS** – The new curriculum also provides unrivaled clarity for career paths. In contrast to conventional academic domains—humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, fine arts, performing arts, and so forth—the College's new curriculum is aligned with four meaningful career sectors: Health & Scientific Research Sector; Law, Policy & the Public Sector; Creative Sector; and Business & Technology Sector. As freshmen, most students do not know for certain what career they will seek after graduation, and they often know even less about the careers associated with specific majors. The College's new curriculum orients students toward general career domains, maximizing flexibility of choice while still advancing students toward the area of their greatest career interest.

**3+1 DEGREES** – The College's new curriculum provides opportunity for students to earn a master's degree alongside their bachelor's degree, requiring only a capstone summer session to complete the last remaining graduate coursework. Even better, students complete the majority of graduate coursework during their four years of undergraduate study and pay no additional tuition during this time.

#### HOW IS THE NEW CURRICULUM AN IMPROVEMENT OVER PEAK?

The PEAK curriculum required that all students complete a major and three minors. The obligation to complete these four structured programs required students to commit to their academic pathway early and left little room to explore. The new curriculum provides much more flexibility for students to take classes simply because they are interested and not only due to requirements. It also provides more options within the curriculum. PEAK students could only earn a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree, whereas under the new curriculum students can earn either a B.A. or a Bachelor of Science, shifting the type of coursework they complete based on their needs. In addition, the new curriculum is stocked with roughly 20 certificates, typically requiring only three courses for completion, and these show skills and achievement that students earn along the way. And, of course, students can still complete minors—but only if they choose. "Our new curriculum builds on PEAK's goal of connecting liberal arts with career prep but adds more flexibility. Students can now choose between a B.A. or B.S.,

add minors or pre-professional tracks, and earn skill-based certificates in areas like Python, Spanish, and ethics," says Schutz. "These changes respond to student demand for more personalized and career-relevant options."

#### WHAT PRECIPITATED THE NEED TO REVISE THE CURRICULUM?

PEAK was a solid curriculum that offered students breadth and depth. However, it was complicated and difficult to complete, particularly for transfer students. "Our new curriculum simplifies graduation for transfer students by applying transfer credits more clearly and eliminating the PEAK model's complex minor requirements," says Gades. Moreover, under PEAK, career pathways were not always clear. Students were required to complete a full academic program in Humanities & Fine Arts, Social Sciences & History, Natural Sciences & Mathematics, and Professional Foundations & Enhancements. "These categories and their justification were not always clear to students," says Gades. "We felt we owed them a more functional grouping aligned with career fields."

#### WHAT PROCESS WAS FOLLOWED THAT LED TO THIS CHANGE?

PEAK underwent major reform in 2019, which helped with some of the issues described above but left others intact. "Interest in a radically new approach grew in the wake of that reform and 'peaked' in 2023 with a report from a faculty working group," says Gades. On the heels of that report, the College's Board of Trustees chartered a task force to review strategic considerations and ultimately requested that the faculty address the issues directly. Student input was sought and taken into account, although the faculty had (and still have) sole authority to propose, deliberate upon, and ultimately endorse any specific curricular changes. "The new curriculum is the product of a period of intense work by the entire faculty," says Schutz.

#### WHY SHIFT TO FOUR 4-CREDIT COURSES PER TERM?

The decision was based on student workload data and peer comparisons. It helps ensure students stay healthy, encountering less busyness for busyness sake, and have an opportunity for reflection and absorption of and deep engagement with course material. "Our students were doing significantly more academic work than peers," says Gades. "The four-course model acknowledges that effort, reduces burnout risk, and aligns us with top-ranking liberal arts colleges and universities across the country."

#### HOW DOES A 4-DAY WEEK AFFECT CAMPUS? WILL STUDENTS SPEND MORE TIME IN CLASS DURING THOSE FOUR DAYS?

With the exception of teaching courses, all offices are open five days a week, and faculty and staff will be conducting business as usual throughout the week. Regarding class sessions, it is neither the case that classes will last longer or that class time will be cut. Rather, survey data demonstrates that College of Idaho students spend more time working on academics outside of class than students at other colleges/universities. "The combination of time in class and working on class material outside of class determines the amount of credit students earn in a course," says Cammann. "We have known for some time that our students were not receiving full credit for their extra effort." The adjustment in the amount of credit earned in each of the College's courses means fewer courses each week, each semester, and each year, and that increased efficiency means that it is possible for all students to take all classes in one fewer days each week. As a result, Fridays are available for all manner of co-curriculars, personal development, work, and enhancements. "Fridays give students flexible time to focus on what matters to them—academic support, community-engaged learning, outdoor programs, career prep, or simply rest," says Schutz. "It's a chance to catch up, explore interests, or participate in off-campus opportunities."

#### CAN CURRENT STUDENTS STILL GRADUATE UNDER PEAK?

Though the new curriculum will be in full effect this fall, all continuing students—that is, rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors who started with PEAK—will have the option to finish the programs they began under the PEAK curriculum. "A strong majority of continuing students, however, has already transitioned to the new curriculum, and we anticipate more will do so as the fall term begins," says Cammann.

#### WHAT NEW MAJORS OR ADD-ON PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE?

New majors include biochemistry, finance, criminology, international affairs, pre-engineering, psychological science, and Spanish language for business. "We also have new minors in data science, sustainability, and water as well as pre-professional specializations in counseling and clinical psychology and social work," says Schutz. "And, our new set of skills-based certificates, such as child and adolescent development, population health, and R programming, allow our students to stand out from the crowd as they pursue their future career."

## INTRODUCING A 3+1 DEGREE

As part of its new curriculum, the College will offer this fall its first 3+1 degree, an innovative approach to education providing students the opportunity to earn both their bachelor's and master's degrees in just four years and a capstone summer. The College's Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership (MAOL) is designed to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to lead and manage organizations effectively. It will provide students with a deep understanding of organizational dynamics, strategic management, and effective leadership practices. Graduates will develop the expertise to be dynamic, influential, and ethical leaders in an ever-evolving organizational landscape.

#### KEY FEATURES OF THE 3+1 MAOL DEGREE INCLUDE:



##### Accelerated Completion

Five of the nine MAOL graduate courses are completed during a student's senior year of their undergraduate program and the remaining four courses are taken in the summer after graduating with their bachelor's degree.



##### Interdisciplinary Learning

Curriculum integrates psychology, sociology, and communications with a strong emphasis on applying leadership practices in real-world settings.



##### Affordable

A 3+1 degree offers one of the most affordable pathways to a graduate degree in the nation, helping students save time and money without sacrificing a high-quality education.



##### Real-World + Academic Expertise

MAOL faculty combine deep academic knowledge with hands-on industry experience to deliver a truly impactful educational experience.



**DR. ANDREW I. ELLESTAD**

Assistant Professor of Business & Accounting and Director of the MAOL Program

For **MORE** information, visit:  
<https://youtu.be/2wwQSYutCH4>



**MORE!**

# THE COLLEGE LAUNCHES IDAHO'S ONLY PUBLIC POLICY MASTER'S DEGREE



**MCKAY CUNNINGHAM, GRADUATE PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR OF THE MAPP PROGRAM, IS A CONSTITUTIONAL LAW SCHOLAR WHO REGULARLY TESTIFIES BEFORE THE IDAHO LEGISLATURE. JODI NAFZGER, GRADUATE ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR OF INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS AND COMPLIANCE, IS A FORMER PROSECUTOR ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES IMPACTING CHILDREN. CUNNINGHAM AND NAFZGER, WHO ARE BOTH ACADEMICS AND PRACTICING LAWYERS, HAVE BEEN WORKING COLLABORATIVELY TO EXTEND THE COLLEGE'S STRONG REPUTATION IN POLITICAL ECONOMY, HISTORY AND MATHEMATICS INTO THE GRADUATE ARENA WITH OUR NEW MAPP DEGREE.**

It's no surprise that the College has a hard-earned reputation for rigorous study and academic achievement in political economy, psychology and history. So, it shouldn't surprise anyone familiar with Yote academics, that the College is launching a master's degree that leverages these historic strengths.

This Fall, the College will seat its first class of enterprising students seeking a Master of Applied Public Policy. We call it the MAPP. The program focuses on the design, execution, and evaluation of public policy. MAPP prepares graduates for careers in government, non-profits, the private sector, and more generally, professions that involve policy research and analysis.

It's not hard to identify policies on the national or local level that ill-serve the people those policies are meant to benefit. How can we better use data, ethical cannon, and political theory to design and implement policies that benefit society in enduring and equitable ways? The College's MAPP seeks to do just that with a coterie of proven faculty and practicing policymakers.

To be sure, there are scores of other public policy programs across the nation, which merits comparison. The College's MAPP program diverges from traditional public policy programs in a number of vital respects. Where traditional master of public policy programs, or MPPs, emphasize the conceptual and theoretical tenets underpinning the degree, the College's MAPP purposely goes a step further, revealing the myriad ways that conceptual principles are applied in practice.

MAPP teaches theory through the prism of current policy. Even more specifically, the MAPP program dissects current Idaho and

Intermountain West policy and does so through the expertise of current policymakers. Situated in a relatively small state and with 134 years-worth of alumni, students in the MAPP program will learn from and interact with current Idaho policymakers from a variety of sectors. Access to the state legislature, lobbying war rooms, and city halls provides concrete exemplars and experiences that complement coursework instruction.

The program purposely accommodates working professionals. The lion's share of coursework occurs online, but students and faculty meet once a week in the evening during term. We anticipate a range of backgrounds from the young professionals who will join this program. In-person class meetings foster collaboration, peer-to-peer learning, and the critical time to network with current Idaho policymakers. Notably, in-person meetings will be in Boise – not Caldwell, allowing our students to earn a powerfully useful master's degree while maintaining a busy family and career lifestyle.

"It's easy to become disillusioned with our local and national politics. Much has been said about the emergence of 'post-truth democracy,' and the cynical relativism that attends the belief that the pursuit of data, facts, and truth is no longer advantageous," says Professor McKay Cunningham, the College's director of the MAPP program. "We are going in the opposite direction. Through rigorous study and informed analysis, the MAPP program seeks to pursue truth in the design, implementation, and evaluation of laws, rules, and policies that reflect who we want to be."



**MORE!**

To learn **MORE** visit:  
<https://youtu.be/ycFXGIRIVAc>

## CONTRIBUTING MAPP FACULTY



**Dr. Cameron Arnzen '17**

M.A. in Political Science from Duke University and  
Ph.D. in Politics & Education from Columbia  
University; and Postdoctoral Research Associate at  
Brown University.



**Stelios Panageotou, Ph.D.**

Ph.D. in Political Economy from University of  
Tennessee; and Assistant Professor in Political  
Economy at The College of Idaho.



**John Michael Schert, M.P.A.**

M.P.A. from the John F. Kennedy School of  
Government at Harvard University and an  
Eisenhower Fellow; and Founder of JMS & Company.



**Dr. Cheryl Schonhardt-Bailey**

M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science from University  
of California, Los Angeles; and Professor of Political  
Science at the London School of Economics.

## THE COLLEGE OF IDAHO PARTNERS WITH THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF LIFESTYLE MEDICINE



In fall 2024, the College successfully launched its innovative Doctor of Medical Science (DMSc) program, the first doctoral offering in its history. Now, in collaboration with the American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM), the College offers a unique opportunity for students to immerse themselves in the DMSc's Lifestyle Medicine and Advanced Clinical Practice curriculum. This track emphasizes preventive care, evidence-based interventions, and the development of diverse clinical expertise. The program integrates the six pillars of lifestyle medicine—nutrition, physical activity, stress management, sleep, social relationships, and avoiding risky substances—into clinical practice to address chronic disease and promote overall well-being.

"Through this program, students build a wide range of clinical skills, including advanced diagnostics, treatment planning, and patient management strategies, all aligned with the principles of lifestyle medicine," says Dr. Doug Long, associate program director for the DMSc program. This dual approach ensures graduates are equipped to lead in the evolving healthcare landscape. By leveraging support and mentorship from both the College and ACLM, students are prepared to contribute meaningfully to the future of patient-centered, holistic care and lead efforts toward healthier communities and sustainable health outcomes.

"Lifestyle medicine is not only good for our patients, it's good for us, as providers," says Dr. Kari Bernard, director of the DMSc program. "Regardless of their specialty, PAs can leverage the College's Lifestyle Medicine curriculum to empower patients—and themselves—to live healthier, more fulfilling lives."

Visit our site to learn **MORE**:  
<https://youtu.be/glXnwX7YGdI>



**MORE!**

## BUILDING SUCCESSION PLANS FOR IDAHO'S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM



Unbeknownst to many, the College was the first college or university in Idaho to be approved and accredited to offer graduate programs by both the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NCCU) in 1953 and the Idaho State Board of Education (ISBE) in 1954. Throughout its history, the College has continuously offered a Master of Education (M.Ed.). Though the focus of this degree has ranged over time—including elementary and secondary administration; guidance, school and community counseling; and most recently, curriculum and instruction—the College has remained committed to educating the next generation of teachers and leaders in Idaho. This summer, the College is once again meeting statewide need by launching an M.Ed. in Educational Leadership. Idaho is currently experiencing a shortage

of qualified applicants to serve as principals and superintendents, especially in rural areas. According to the Idaho Educator Pipeline Report published by the ISBE in December 2024, "[s]taffing areas of greatest need are school principals, directors of special education, and school superintendents." The College aims to help Idaho meet this critical need. In doing so, it welcomes Dr. Matt McDaniel, a longstanding leader and school administrator in Idaho, as program director for the new M.Ed. degree. "We are beyond thrilled to continue the longstanding College of Idaho tradition of providing high-quality graduate education opportunities," says McDaniel. "The M.Ed. in Educational Leadership will help school districts build a pipeline of competent, confident leaders equipped with the tools and experiences to be positive agents of change."

# EMMA REDMAN:

## A TRUMAN FINALIST AND TRUE PUBLIC SERVANT

BY LUNA MCCUSKER, A JUNIOR MAJORING IN POLITICAL ECONOMY

In sitting down with Emma Redman, it is immediately clear why she was named as a finalist for the prestigious Truman Scholarship—she has a passion for public service. Growing up in Meridian, Idaho, her mother, a public school first-grade teacher, and her father, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service, instilled within Redman the importance of serving the needs of one's community.

Redman, a junior with a double major in biology and political economy, spent last summer in Hailey, Idaho, teaching in the College's Summer Bridge program, which combines education with traditional summer-camp experiences for at-risk students. She also currently serves as vice president of student government at the College as well as a resident assistant and a student ambassador.

While she values all of her roles, she's most proud of leading Public Sphere—a campus club that fosters meaningful dialogue between students and faculty on policy issues. "I feel really proud of the conversations we've fostered and encouraged on campus," says Redman. In reflecting on her work with Public Sphere, Redman fondly recalls her high school government and debate teacher, who introduced her to the world of helping others through the power of policy. "He also provided me with a saying that has driven me ever since," she says. "Try hard. Be kind."

This genuine love for investing in her community led Redman to express her interest to College faculty in pursuing the Truman Scholarship, the premier graduate school scholarship for students interested in public service. The Truman Scholarship dates back to 1975, when President Gerald Ford signed the Act of Congress to award scholarships to persons who demonstrate outstanding potential for a career in public service. This scholarship was created in honor of President Harry S. Truman's vision for a program for students that would encourage educated citizenship and political responsibility.

Each year, four applicants may apply from a higher education institution, and Redman was chosen from the College. The process of applying is intensive, requiring multiple essays and letters of recommendation and an interview if selected as a finalist.

"The process of applying for the Truman Scholarship was equally rigorous and fulfilling," says Redman. "As a scholarship that invests in the next generation of public servants, the application requires essays outlining one's leadership and public service experience, graduate school plans, career aspirations, and a policy proposal."



It was this 2,000-character policy proposal that was most daunting for Redman as it required clearly and concisely identifying a public problem, offering a solution, and outlining major obstacles. For her topic, Redman described the issue of harmful algal blooms in the Snake River that come from nutrient runoff produced by agriculture. She drew on her background in biology and political economy to discuss realistic solutions and propose changes to farming practices.

When asked who her biggest influence and mentor has been, Redman immediately responds with: "I feel really grateful to be on a campus where that question is hard to answer." She praised faculty from the biology, political economy, and history departments for helping and supporting her in the application process for the Truman Scholarship and acknowledged that they contributed tremendously to her academic development in life-changing ways.

**"TO BE A TRUMAN FINALIST IS AN HONOR. THE APPLICATION PROCESS FORCED ME TO RECKON WITH WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A PUBLIC SERVANT, PARTICULARLY DURING A TIME OF GOVERNMENT RESTRUCTURING, AND WHERE I SEE MY NICHE WITHIN PUBLIC SERVICE. THE EXPLORATION AND CONTEMPLATION THAT TOOK PLACE DURING THE APPLICATION PROCESS PROVIDED ME WITH A CLEARER IDEA OF HOW I MIGHT COMBINE MY INTERESTS INTO A MEANINGFUL CAREER IN PUBLIC SERVICE."**

After completing her undergraduate degree, Redman hopes to attend the University of Washington to earn a master's degree in marine affairs, a program that offers a comprehensive education at the intersection of public policy and marine science. She hopes to research how human activity impacts the ocean and translate her findings into outreach materials that educate the public on the ocean-society connection. Her goal is to reach people like herself—those in inland or rural areas without direct access to the ocean—so they understand how their actions affect marine ecosystems.

Redman is exceptionally driven to help and serve others. Whether that's through research and outreach that advocates for marine-conscious public policy or through creating the donut shop that she and her father dreamt about when she was little, either way, she aims to do incredibly important work that benefits society.

"The opportunity to apply for a Truman Scholarship has provided me with experience and connections that I would not have gotten otherwise," says Redman. "I'm excited to see where the rest of the process takes me, and I'm confident I will be thoroughly prepared for whatever comes next."

# JACKSON NASSIR

BY NATHAN BADGER, A JUNIOR MAJORING IN HISTORY AND MATHEMATICS

**“PEOPLE CALL ME AN OPTIMIST, BUT I AM REALLY NOT AN OPTIMIST. I JUST WORK VERY HARD TO FIND THE BEAUTY IN THINGS AND IN PEOPLE.”**



Thanks to Jackson Nassir, a senior majoring in business and art, visitors to the Cruzen Murray Library may come by beauty with ease. His art installation traverses all three stories of the building and, through masterly craftsmanship, carries a story of life, death, and beauty throughout.

Visitors to the library might begin their journey on the building's top floor, where blue, gold, and black silk flowers first arrest the attention. They sit piled in glass display boxes and delicately perched on the wall of the stairwell. Guests are invited to follow the trail of petals downward. In the basement, the source of the floating tokens of life is finally revealed: a dying tree. The spindly structure of wood is covered in a mass of determined flowers and surrounded by a floating cloud of those that have relinquished their hold and begun to ascend. In contrast to these releasing and rising tokens are 25 stones piled in rigid construction. The viewer's journey ends with this grounded punctuation, but the experience—of reflection and introspection—continues far longer.

The installation was Nassir's final project in an independent study of advanced sculpture under art professor Stephen Fisher. Fisher pushed Nassir to try new materials and, more importantly, to reimagine the possibilities of installation.

“The space is half the work,” Nassir explains. Before he began constructing the piece, he first had to find a suitable location. Nassir describes that, even as a child, he had an eye for space and a certain distaste for its misuse. As he remembers it, “I wanted my art to be put into a space that will bring people into an underutilized, unvisited space.”

Not only did the Cruzen Murray Library offer Nassir a spot in one of the more architecturally celebrated buildings on campus, it offered somewhat of a blank canvas. Nassir's original plan for the installation only included the tree, yet the vertical scapes of blank wall invited him to reconsider. From the first shipment of petals in early October 2024 to the final stone placement in January of 2025, Nassir significantly altered his vision. While he received funding as part of the Student Research Conference, the money went towards materials, leaving him to craft and iterate the installation without any outside help. The final product stands as a testament to Nassir's many hours of conversation with professor Fisher and many more silent hours of independent navigation.

The installation is an ode to life and death and the life within death. Having endured near-death experiences in the past, Nassir stresses the importance of celebration in his piece. As he puts it: “It's a beautiful thing, death. It really is. And it's often tragic and its often depressing, but the reality is, it happens to all of us.”

Moving forward, Nassir expects art to remain a part of his life. While the graduating senior will soon begin a full-time career in finance, he has also been selected as a featured summer artist in McCall and is expected to partner with a Treasure Valley décor store. Nassir's dream is to open an art consultation business with his parents, whom he cites as the greatest supporters of his art journey.

As for the installation, it is unclear where the many pieces will end up. Nassir hopes for it to remain in the college library but has also begun conversations with a number of installation museums. The potentials are plenty. Yet, if students had a say, the installation would never leave the place it first took root.



To see **MORE** of Jackson's work visit: <https://shorturl.at/NvvRV>



**MORE!**

# NATHAN BADGER AT GULL ISLAND

BY CONNER KLEIN, A JUNIOR MAJORING IN HISTORY AND PHYSICS-MATHEMATICS



Nathan Badger is a junior at The College of Idaho, majoring in history with a minor in mathematics. The summer after his sophomore year, Nate attended Gull Island Institute, a liberal arts and environmental program on Penikese Island in Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts. Founded by former Harvard professors Ana Kielson and Justin Reynolds, the program challenged Badger and his cohort to consider place as both a physical and cultural entity.

Gull Island's curriculum is built on three pillars: academics, student self-government, and manual labor. The cohort met each weekday for two- to three-hour seminars to discuss and interrogate daily readings related to climate. Additionally, the group oversaw the island's operations—deciding on the voting system, determining how and what food was delivered, and organizing faculty accommodations. Members also alternated between farming oysters on a nearby island, cooking meals, and doing household chores. The outdoor engagement deeply resonated with Badger.

Growing up in Idaho, Badger has fond memories of fly fishing along the Boise River and weekend trips to Sun Valley, surrounded by the vast, beautiful landscapes of the Treasure Valley. Reflecting on Gull Island, he now speaks with urgency about the wilderness he once simply admired: "I try to cope with the fact that these wide spaces that I had grown up against would be the subject of development, that

these spaces had changed and would continue to do so." Gull Island confronted Badger with climate change as a tangible reality, embodied in the microcosm of an island off the Massachusetts coast. But once we've acknowledged climate change, how do we meet it?

Gull Island asked the cohort to consider what a pedagogy of climate might look like. "We recognize the liberal arts as an approach that can tackle the interdisciplinary demands of climate change." Inspired by the Institute, Badger founded the Placer Institute. Based in the Boise foothills and catering to high school students, it offers a curriculum that draws from texts on ecocriticism, environmental history, and philosophy, alongside outdoor activities that challenge students on the precipice of not only their futures, but the future of a rapidly changing landscape. The Placer Institute reflects the potential of local solutions in addressing far-reaching problems.

Part of learning is realizing what you don't know. Gull Island presented Badger and his cohort with more questions than answers, but its focus on labor and self-governance showed how humans engage with—and alter—the planet. It equipped members with the tools to enact change, and, more importantly, the awareness of how to do so responsibly. With this experience, Badger hopes to pursue a JD-PhD in environmental law, guided by the understanding of place that the Institute instilled. "The law can be more than a pile of statutes," says Badger. "It is inspired by place in pursuit of place." Gull Island gave Badger a place of his own—one that encourages him to look toward a brighter future rooted in collaboration and mutual responsibility.

To see **MORE** of Nathan's interview visit:  
<https://youtu.be/cGvsvwKAw50>



**MORE!**

## STUDENTS HONORED FOR BRAIN-TUMOR RESEARCH



Two College of Idaho students earned top honors at a National Institutes of Health conference for their presentation of findings from their research into a fast-growing brain tumor.

Ruby Olvera, a junior double majoring in biomedical science and business administration, and Colton Troxel, a junior majoring in biomedical science, were awarded the Best Undergraduate Student Oral Presentation at the 2025 Western Regional IDeA Conference in Anchorage, Alaska, in February. Their talk was titled "An Analysis of Glioblastoma Gene Expression Using Single-Cell RNA Sequencing."

The conference is held every two years. It brings together students and faculty from each of the Western states (Hawaii, Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada, and New Mexico) in the National Institutes of Health-IDEA Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence.

"They did a fantastic job explaining the project and fielding questions from the audience," says Dr. Luke Daniels, professor of biology. "And, when they presented, talks weren't divided by career stage. Rather, Ruby and Colton were in a session with graduate students and faculty. But I think the reason they got the award is that this is far and away not a typical project undergraduates would take on at most institutions — both the type of project and the combination of lab techniques and data science."

Previous research by Daniels provided the foundation for the students' work. For the past decade, he has been studying glioblastoma (GBM),

which has a five-year survival rate of only 5 percent. "One of the hard things about understanding how cancer grows and treating cancer is that tumor cells aren't all identical," he says.

In the spring of 2024, Emily Freko, a senior majoring in biomedical science, embarked on a new project in the lab, preparing GBM cells for sequencing. She cultured cells in several different ways — a standard way used in most labs and another method that coaxes the cells into behaving like mini-tumors (so much so that cells grown in this way can be directly implanted into mice, where they form tumors). Prior to leaving for a highly competitive summer internship at Massachusetts Institute of Technology focused on biology and neuroscience, Freko sent the cells for sequencing, which paved the way for Olvera and Troxel to obtain the data necessary to launch their own project.

Their project evaluated the differences between cells to get a sense of how different the tumor cells are from each other and in what ways. They did this by looking at which genes were turned on and off in each of about 10,000 cells. To do this, they had to sequence the mRNA that is expressed in each of the 10,000 cells, which resulted in more than 100 million individual sequences.

"This amount of data becomes tricky to deal with pretty quickly," says Daniels, "so the only way to make sense of it is through large-scale data analysis techniques, such as machine learning, which required Ruby and Colton to learn the programming language R."

Using machine learning, Olvera and Troxel generated results that contribute to a better understanding of gene expression in GL261 cells and suggest candidate genes that may be responsible for glioma tumor formation.

# STUDENTS STEP OUT OF THEIR COMFORT ZONE

In early spring of 2021, not even a year after the country began facing a global pandemic, Jason Shearer, CEO of the Wood River Community YMCA, approached The College of Idaho with a unique proposal to launch a SummerBridge program to address the academic, social and emotional impacts of the pandemic, which were particularly severe for our elementary school-aged populations. Within a matter of weeks, the Wood River Y and the College launched a program with an ambitious vision to include an innovative blend of rigorous literacy and math curriculum coupled with traditional camp activities, engaging field trips and healthy meals.

Over the years, key organizations, such as the Blaine School District, Teach for America, Far + Wise, Lee Pesky Learning Center, and the Sun Valley Community School have partnered with the Y and the College to improve educational outcomes for socio-economically challenged elementary school-aged children throughout Blaine County. "What we are doing here is a six-week summer school experience for children who have been identified as being set back in their skill development and their learning," says Dr. Stelios Panageotou, professor of political economy and the College's Wood River Y internship supervisor. "And so, we are trying to offset what tends to happen in the summer generally, but especially with a population of children who are already behind."

The Wood River Valley is a popular recreational, tourist-heavy destination. A large number of immigrant workers from Central and South America make up the economy's service sector. The language barrier impacting these workers and their families often results in children who struggle to keep up with their peers academically. "We are bridges for the kids who struggle the most to adapt. Because most of the time if you have this barrier of language, you cannot express how you feel; what you think," says Mikaelly Monterio-Dantas, a sophomore majoring in psychology. "I feel that it's so important to have



the bilingual but also the multicultural diversity of people working and people looking after the kids."

This summer, the College embarks on its fifth year of the SummerBridge program, during which approximately 20 College of Idaho students will act as mentors and tutors to more than 200 elementary-aged children. "Stepping outside of your comfort zone and doing something where the priority is absolutely not you. It's not what you're going to get out of it. It's not what it is going to look like on a resume" says Cole Roberts, a senior majoring in political economy. "The priority is that I want to help a community, and I want to learn about a community."

To see **MORE** visit:  
<https://youtu.be/W0uKGsnT3a4>



**MORE!**

# CELEBRATING CULTURE

Imagine a world of vibrant music, cultural traditions, and breathtaking performances. That's exactly what the College's International Student Organization (ISO) brings to life with its annual Cultural Show. From energetic rehearsals to intricate costume preparations, every detail is perfected. And, when the lights go up, you'll enjoy it all without ever leaving your seat.

"Attending the ISO Cultural Show for the first time was an eye-opening experience for me. As I walked into the event, I felt a mix of excitement and curiosity, eager to see what the night had in store," says Savannah Murphy, the College's digital media specialist.

The ISO Cultural Show at The College of Idaho is a highly anticipated event that celebrates the richness of the College's global community. It provides a unique opportunity for students to showcase their cultural heritage, fostering an environment of inclusivity, understanding, and pride. "I was amazed by the energy in the room, with students from all around the world coming together to celebrate their cultures. I found myself fully immersed in the performances, each one so unique and full of passion," says Murphy.

This year, 63 students came together to create, design, and perform a three-hour event, showcasing traditional customs from around the world and discussing current issues through songs, dances, skits, poems, and more. As the lights went up, you were suddenly immersed in the colorful dances of Nepal followed by the fire moves of Zimbabwe. And, as the show came to a close, you were mesmerized by Chinese jazz and a traditional Armenian dance completed by soldiers as they get ready for war. "ISO has mastered the art of teleporting," says Shushanik Hayriyan, a junior majoring in international political economy. "We need to reserve the patent. Seriously."

This vibrant celebration of tradition and talent not only highlights the culture on campus but also strengthens the bonds between students, faculty, and staff – creating a memorable experience for all. "It was inspiring to see people sharing pieces of their culture so openly. I gained a new level of appreciation for the rich diversity we have on campus. By the end of the night, I learned how meaningful it is to be part of such an inclusive community," says Murphy. "The ISO Cultural Show wasn't just an event—it was a reminder of the beauty in our differences. I'm already looking forward to attending next year."



**MORE!**

To see **MORE** visit:  
<https://shorturl.at/IFaKs>

## RAPTOSH WEAVES A WEB OF INTERSECTING TRAUMAS

BY KELLI HOLM, REPORTER, AS PUBLISHED IN THE IDAHO PRESS



Diane Raptosh was cooking eggplant parmesan on the afternoon of July 17, 2018 when she received a phone call that would turn her life upside down.

Mere hours earlier, the only person to ever hold the title of Boise Poet Laureate had been texting her brother in Truckee, California about his latest photography opportunity. Guess what I'm doing today, Eric had written. Attached was an image of the small plane he and his husband were about to board, from which he planned to take aerial shots of nearby Pyramid Lake.

Instead, the craft had crashed due to engine failure shortly after leaving the airport. Eric was in intensive care, Raptosh's sister-

in-law told her, and his husband Peter and the pilot, Kenneth, were dead.

"I dropped everything, got in my car, drove to California," said Raptosh, a longtime professor of English at the College of Idaho. "My brother was being treated for multiple wounds, and we didn't know what his prognosis was. He was able to communicate by squeezing our fingers, like 'can you hear us?'"

The sole survivor of the accident, Eric had a broken neck, leg and ribs, in addition to serious nervous and spinal cord damage. He was paralyzed from the waist down.

Raptosh took on many caregiving responsibilities for Eric, and for a long time was too exhausted and traumatized to think of writing poetry again. But a fourteener – a sonnet in which all 14 lines each have 14 syllables – she'd composed before the crash was increasingly relevant to not only the country's predicament, but her family's own.

"Trauma at the level of family and trauma at the level of nation kind of mirror each other, it seems. In the United States, it's fairly easy to notice a resounding lack of care-for," she said. "Poetry's a great caretaking space. I think poetry is a healing force, and that's why I've turned to it for so many decades."

The subsequent project became "I Eric America" – Raptosh's sixth solo poetry book, a collection of 42 non-rhyming sonnets which weave common themes of caretaking, rage, grief and disability between the self, family and nation alluded to in the title.

Many of the poems tackle scourges like racism and misogyny that have plagued the United States since its inception, while other topics, like COVID-19, are fresh wounds.

"Talk about lack of care-for as a nation, so many left to die," she said of the pandemic's relevance to the collection's message. "I can try to name some politicians and presidents who did not get the love they needed from their fathers, and this kind of unprocessed trauma ends up getting played out on the world stage in ways we're all too familiar with, resulting in the various -isms and conditions we see at the level of country."

A thesis that defined "I Eric America" for Raptosh throughout the writing process was that if we address our pain in order to work it out, perhaps we would do less harm to our families, communities and nation. Today, Eric has a new boyfriend and continues his artistic endeavors.

"We're in the midst of many perils and possibilities, and the book reckons with many of those perils and possibilities, pointing – with some seriousness, I hope – toward the possibilities, for sure," Raptosh said.

## POSEN RECOGNIZED BY THE SOCIETY FOR MUSIC THEORY



Dr. Thomas William Posen, a visiting assistant professor of music at the College, has been honored with two prestigious awards from the Society for Music Theory. He received the Emerging Scholar Award for one peer-reviewed article and the Outstanding Publication Award for another.

Posen's Emerging Scholar Award stems from his 2023 article entitled "Windows into Beethoven's Lessons in Bonn: Kirnberger's *Die Wahren Grundsätze Zum Gebrauch Der Harmonie* (1773) and Vogler's *Gründe Der Kuhrpfälzischen Tonschule in Beyspielen* (1776/1778)," which was published in *Music Theory Online* in 2023. This article stands out for its deep exploration of the educational landscape that influenced the young Ludwig van Beethoven in the late 18th century, particularly in his formative years in Bonn, Germany.

Additionally, Posen's article, "The Interaction of Mode and Psalmody in Glarean's Circle," published in *Music Theory and Analysis* in 2023 received the Outstanding Publication Award. Posen's analysis of the works written by the 16th-century Swiss music theorist and humanist Heinrich Glarean alongside his predecessors sheds new light on the interaction between ancient medieval and Renaissance practices and thought. Through a detailed study of historical texts spanning more than seven centuries, Posen reveals that the intricacies of the interaction of modes and psalmody gradually led to the emergence of the major and minor scales – a cornerstone of western music theory.

Posen teaches courses in music theory, composition, and music technology and production. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in physics and astrophysics, a Bachelor of Music in keyboard performance (piano), and a Master of Music (dual concentration) in music theory and composition and piano performance from the University of New Mexico. He earned a Ph.D. in music theory from McGill University.



To learn **MORE** about Posen's research for his dissertation, visit: <https://youtu.be/feBxEfFmQwc>

**MORE!**

## FINDING HOPE IN LOSS: ROCHELLE L. JOHNSON'S AWARD-WINNING ESSAY "PHANTOM PAINS"



An essay on loss written by a College of Idaho professor has won the Georgia Review Prose Prize.

Rochelle L. Johnson received the honor for her essay "Phantom Pains," in which she explores the emotional landscapes of both personal and planetary loss.

The award is sponsored by The Georgia Review, the literary-cultural journal published out of the University of Georgia

since 1947. Acclaimed writer Allegra Hyde judged the submissions. She praised Johnson's essay for its emotional clarity and depth, saying, "Reading 'Phantom Pains,' I couldn't stop highlighting lines." Hyde said she was struck by the essay's ability to offer "profound wisdom through frank and compassionate engagement with uncertainty, unknowingness, and grief."

Hyde said the essay effectively weaves Johnson's experience of living as an amputee with her work as an environmental studies professor, offering a unique lens on both physical and ecological loss. "I finished the essay feeling both moved and inspired," Hyde said, reflecting on Johnson's willingness to share her vulnerability as a model for students and others who face challenges both personal and global.

Johnson, who holds a Ph.D. in American literature and environmental history, says the essay emerged from her life as both a teacher and an amputee. "Over time," she explains, "I realized that these seemingly disparate parts of who I am are actually quite similar: both involve moving through grief to hope."

In "Phantom Pains," she shares how her own journey of navigating physical loss helped her better understand and support her students,

many of whom struggle with the emotional weight of the environmental crises they study. "As an amputee, I also live in a landscape that has lost part of itself (my body)," Johnson writes, "but I learned that the grounds of my grief can be a source of hope and even joy."

She says this insight reshaped her teaching, allowing her to connect with students on a deeper level by openly acknowledging loss and modeling resilience. The essay not only documents a personal transformation but also offers a hopeful path forward for those navigating collective grief.

After graduating from Bates College, Johnson earned her M.A. and Ph.D. in American literature and environmental history at Claremont Graduate University. She holds the Bernie McCain Chair in the Humanities at The College of Idaho. Her teaching covers natural history, museums, writing, and environmental studies. She also teaches for the Bread Loaf School of English and Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Johnson received the Carnegie Foundation's Idaho Professor of the Year award in 2010.

Read **MORE:**  
<https://shorturl.at/qTj4n>



**MORE!**

## RETIRING FACULTY



### STEPHEN FISHER

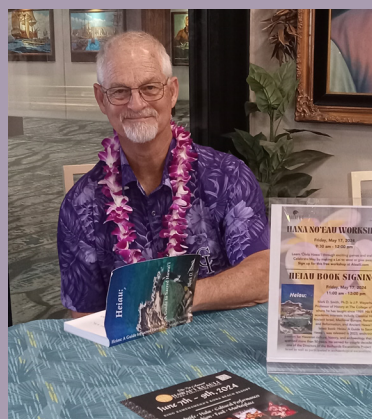
PROFESSOR OF ART

After 35 years at The College of Idaho, art professor and ceramic artist Stephen Fisher is retiring. A Massachusetts native, Fisher earned a B.A. at Bowdoin College in Maine, where, unlike at the College, he didn't know his professors outside the

classroom. At the College, his studio in Langroise became one of the most welcoming places on campus.

Fisher completed a Master of Fine Arts in Texas and discovered Idaho during a stint at the Sun Valley Center for the Arts. A skier and avid tennis player, he has also taught high school and sailed from Alaska to Panama.

At The College of Idaho, Fisher wore many hats—teaching ceramics, art history, sculpture, and web design, chairing the department, and serving as faculty president. He especially valued the senior art exhibitions, calling them a chance to discuss art on a deeper level while allowing students to pursue their individual visions. When asked what he'll miss most, Fisher said, "Being in class with the students." But, living nearby, he added with a smile, "I'll be around."



### MARK SMITH

PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AND  
WEYERHAUSER CHAIR

Professor, dean, coach, noon basketball originator, Mark Smith has truly been a man for all seasons at the College. Smith, a classics historian, came to the College in 1989, and among many unique accomplishments, for a time, he taught Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. He has led study-away courses with students to Israel, Greece, and Hawaii and recently memorialized five decades of travel, research, and

commitment to the religious history of the Hawaii islands through his book, "Heiau: A Guide to Sacred Hawai'i," which was published in January 2024.

Asked what he will take away from his long service at the College, he replied that he never expected "the lifelong friendships built with faculty and students." Smith believes that many of his most important contributions and memories with students occurred out of the classroom on winter term trips or informal office visits when a student inquiring about a paper or a text led to "discussions about life."

In addition to his long tenure teaching history, Smith was dean of the faculty from 2003 to 2012. He described his time as dean as being the "ultimate middleman" and defined his role as a "listener."

Smith sums up his educational philosophy and beliefs, "What we do here is going to liberate your life in the long run."

# SPREADSHEETS & SEQUINS: THE DOUBLE LIFE OF SHEALENE ZITNY

BY ANNIE MORRISON, DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI & PARENT RELATIONS



By day, Shealene Zitny works as a senior data engineer for the University of Colorado Boulder, managing student data and ensuring accuracy for internal reporting and audits. She is currently working with several new staff members and loves helping them go from overwhelmed to confident. "It's rewarding to see people realize that data analytics is something they can understand and accomplish."

When the workday ends, Zitny steps into a different role: co-producing Dream Team Variety Company, a high-energy, irreverent performance troupe based in Garden City's Visual Arts Collective (VAC). On the night of their recent show, Saturday Morning Cartoons, she arrives in a feathered blue costume with striped eyeliner. Her business partner, Julie Bean, dresses as Wile E. Coyote to Zitny's Roadrunner. The show includes a cereal-eating emcee (Taylor Hawer '13), a pole-dancing Peewee Herman, singing Betty Boops, and ballet-dancing Care Bears.



Though they dress the part, Zitny and Bean don't perform. Along with their third partner, Hannah Haines, they manage logistics—everything from securing poles, sweeping confetti, and adjusting lights to marketing, ticket sales, and filing taxes. "I naturally become the center of attention in other parts of my life," Zitny says. "I don't need to put myself in front of a crowd." Still, surrounded by performers and fans in the VAC bar after the show, it's clear she draws people in wherever she goes.

Outside of her two jobs, Zitny's calendar is even fuller. She volunteers for HP's She-Tech conference to support young women in STEM, plays bunco once a month, takes piano lessons, and is preparing to become a first-time mom.

That energy and curiosity were evident at The College of Idaho, where she graduated in 2013 with degrees in math and theater. Initially, theater was not part of Zitny's plan. In her sophomore year, the theatre department was short on stage managers, and she stepped in to help, leading her to reconsider.

"One thing I always do is allow myself to change my mind," says Zitny. For her, success meant embracing both her passions.

She says the College's small size and liberal arts model was key to succeeding with her double degrees. At the College, the math and theater departments were a frisbee's throw apart, and the faculty knew each other. When conflicts arose, professors often rescheduled tests or assignments to allow Zitny to accomplish the requirements of both degrees.

Faculty across departments shaped her values. Robin Cruz showed her math's career possibilities; Lynda Danielson emphasized learning through mistakes. Joe Golden reminded her to keep joy in the process, and Mark Lotspeich "inspired me to be myself—even if that self is a little weird," she laughs.

Toward the end of college, Zitny stage managed for Opera Idaho as a temporary sub for Bean, who later brought her onto several more productions. Eventually, Bean—then with the now-defunct Red Light Variety Show—called her in as a last-minute stagehand. Zitny was busy beginning her career at Clearwater Analytics, but she made time to help that evening, and the troupe subsequently voted her in permanently. She stayed on for seven years, until Red Light's final show in 2021. Two years later, Zitny, Bean, and Haines launched Dream Team Variety.

At the core of everything Zitny does is a desire to lift others up. "In analytics, I get to show people that numbers aren't scary," she says. "In theater, I get to give others a platform and help them shine." In both her careers, she espouses the same core values—curiosity, generosity, and the belief that you don't have to choose one box to live in.

Soon, she'll add "mom" to her long list of roles. Like every other title she's taken on, she plans to approach it with thoughtfulness, flexibility, and joy. If her story is any indication, her son will grow up surrounded by spreadsheets and sequins, bedtime stories and backstage cues—and a living example of what it means to create a life full of purpose, creativity, and heart.

## INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS?



**"SCHOLARSHIPS HAVE ALLOWED ME TO ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF BEING A COYOTE WITHOUT THE WEIGHT OF FINANCIAL STRESS AND ULTIMATELY PURSUE MY EDUCATION AND GRADUATE DEBT-FREE," SAYS HANA PFEIFFER '25**

**Your donations allow us to invest in students and educate the next generation. Please consider giving to our Boone Fund where your donation helps the College with the most immediate needs on campus:**

**[www.collegeofidaho.edu/give](http://www.collegeofidaho.edu/give)**



**MORE!**

# SCHOLARSHIP GALA RAISES \$1.35 MILLION

BY JACK CAFFERTY, VICE PRESIDENT OF COLLEGE RELATIONS



## “HELPING STUDENTS FELT BETTER THAN ANY VACATION!”

ELLEN SACHTJEN '68, ATTENDEE & DONOR  
PICTURED WITH BOB PLUMB '73 (on her right) &  
RICH PETER & ANNE THOMAS (on her left)

With more than \$1.35 million raised for scholarships, the 2025 Scholarship Gala was a night full of illumination! Our students lit up the stage with student body president Amara Davidson '25 and recent graduate Joe Calzaretta '24 emceeding the event. More than 30 students attended the event and student highlight posters lined the entry area. The live auction was highlighted by a winning bid from 100-year-old Winston Moore, who purchased his seventh puppy and then donated it back. When all was said and done, the \$31,000 puppy went home with fellow alumni Paul Vinci '91 and Gina Vinci.

Hana Pfeiffer '25, a senior double majoring in accounting and political economy, took the stage as our student speaker. The Rupert, Idaho, superstar brightened everyone's evening with her story of hard work, perseverance, and dedication to helping others during her time at the College. The speech set the tone for our most productive paddle raise ever. Duane and Lori Stueckle surprised everyone with a \$200,000 matching gift. Then, the Yote family rallied with four incredible \$50,000 gifts. The final result was record-breaking, with the paddle raise producing more than \$1 million in gifts for scholarships!

We're often asked by alumni and friends of the College how they can help from afar. Bob and Jean Bonar '66 helped out by sponsoring the puppy again this year. We also had alumni travel in from as far as Florida for the event (thank you, Pam DeCoste '82 and Stephen DeCoste). Two special couples joined us from California. Bob Plumb '73 and Anne Thomas returned from Coronado, and Ellen Sachtjen '68 and Rich Peter traveled from the Los Angeles area. Both couples were able to enjoy lunch on campus with students and then made generous gifts for scholarships that had a significant impact on the event itself. Simply put, we love to have alumni come back, meet students, and celebrate with us!

Please mark your calendars for Friday, March 6, 2026, and make plans to be there for our 2026 Scholarship Gala. Go Yotes!



# WYMAN'S LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE:

## ON THE COURT, IN THE CLASSROOM, AND BEYOND

Few student-athletes leave a legacy quite like Drew Wyman. A cornerstone of The College of Idaho men's basketball program, Wyman capped his career with a national championship, national academic honors, and national recognition for service, all in a single season.

Wyman, a senior from Great Falls, Montana, helped lead the Yotes to their second NAIA Men's Basketball National Championship in three years, dominating Oklahoma Wesleyan in a 93-65 title game victory. The win marked the program's third overall national title and completed a 35-2 season. Wyman, one of five starters who also played in the 2023 title run, earned All-Tournament First Team honors, solidifying his status as one of the most impactful players in program history.

Starting 143 of 145 career games, Wyman leaves as the all-time leader in career starts and ranks among the top scorers with 1,708 points. A model of efficiency, he shot over 50 percent from the field in each of his final two seasons.

But his impact transcended the court.

Named the 2024-25 NAIA Men's Basketball Academic All-America Team Member of

the Year by College Sports Communicators, Wyman became the first in program history to receive the national honor. A Gipson Honors Program Scholar with a perfect 4.0 GPA, he is a three-time Academic All-American, four-time First Team All-Conference honoree, and Cascade Collegiate Conference Scholar-Athlete of the Year.

His service efforts earned him a spot on the inaugural Allstate NACDA Good Works Team, recognizing 20 student-athletes across all divisions. Wyman's community involvement spans youth mentorship through the Legacy Program, support for the Caldwell-area Special Olympics, and advocacy for mental health through the Jae Foundation, this season's jersey sponsor for the Yotes.

In his role with the Legacy Program, Wyman regularly visited local elementary schools, coordinated youth recognition at home games, and built meaningful connections with students. He also helped organize a unified basketball game promoting inclusion, drawing hundreds of spectators.

A leader in student life as treasurer of the Association of Student-Athletes and chief of staff for student government, Wyman exemplifies The College of Idaho ideal: excellence in all pursuits.

From national titles to national honors, Drew Wyman's legacy is one of purpose, leadership, and championship character.



## CALDWELL COURTSIDE:



**DON'T MISS  
OUR NEW  
ATHLETICS  
MAGAZINE:  
CALDWELL  
COURTSIDE  
AVAILABLE  
MONTHLY**

<https://shorturl.at/P5DN7>



**MORE!**

## BACK-TO-BACK GLORY:

### COACH DOM BOLIN LEADS YOTES TO SECOND NATIONAL TITLE



The College of Idaho men's cross country team entered the NAIA National Championships in Columbia, Missouri, with the pressure of a No. 1 national ranking and the weight of high expectations. By the 6-kilometer mark, they found themselves trailing by 20 points. But what followed was a display of discipline and resilience that showcased exactly why they earned that top spot.

Daniel Butler led the charge for the Yotes, placing sixth overall, with teammates Hayden Bostrom and Elias Everist not far behind in 11th and 13th. Their consistency kept the team in contention, but it was the clutch performances from Brevin Vaughan and Oclan Ryan, finishing 27th and 48th respectively, that sealed the victory. With 87 points, the Yotes edged out their competition and claimed the first men's cross country national title in program history.

Behind this achievement is head coach Dom Bolin, who has quickly become a cornerstone of success at The College of Idaho. A 2013 alumnus, Bolin is just three years into his head coaching career. After guiding the women's team to a national title in 2023, he returned this fall to bring home a second championship, this time with the men.

His leadership has not gone unnoticed. Bolin was named NAIA National Coach of the Year and USTFCCCA National Coach of the Year. He also swept regional and conference awards, earning West Region and Cascade Conference Coach of the Year honors for both the men's and women's programs. His ability to elevate both teams simultaneously places him among the elite in collegiate coaching.

While the men stood atop the podium, the women's team quietly secured a seventh-place national finish, a remarkable achievement after graduating four of their top five runners. Kahea Figueira led the way with an 11th-place finish to cap her All-American season.

Both programs swept Cascade Collegiate Conference team titles earlier in the fall, with Butler and Figueira each claiming individual championships. Together, the teams dominated weekly honors and built a culture of consistent excellence.

For Bolin, it's not just about winning. It's about building a legacy. And after two national titles in as many years, the Yotes have made it clear, they are here to stay at the top.

**ARTICLE CONTRIBUTIONS BY SARAH FAJER,**  
DIRECTOR OF SPORTS COMMUNICATION

## ELGIN BAYLOR ARENA:

### HONORING A TRAILBLAZER AND EMPOWERING FUTURE GENERATIONS



Vice President of Athletics Reagan Rossi (right) honors Elgin Baylor and his widow Elaine (left), a College Board of Trustee member, prior to tipoff at a home basketball game.

During the 2024-2025 basketball season, The College of Idaho unveiled a new chapter in its athletic history by renaming its basketball and volleyball arena to honor NBA legend and civil rights pioneer Elgin Baylor. This ceremony came shortly after the establishment of the Elgin & Elaine Baylor Opportunity Fund, which aims to provide 44 full-tuition scholarships to students from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds.

The renaming of the arena marks a major milestone in the College's ongoing commitment to creating opportunities for all, and Baylor's legacy is now permanently etched into the heart of the College's athletic facilities. A trailblazer both on and off the court, Baylor integrated The College of Idaho's basketball team in 1954 and went on to redefine professional basketball. Known for his athleticism and creative playing style, Baylor became the first overall pick in the NBA draft and later helped shape the Los Angeles Lakers into a powerhouse. His connection to The College of Idaho is a testament to the power of inclusion, with his pioneering work in civil rights and basketball inspiring generations of students, athletes, and fans alike.

The renaming event, held during the men's basketball game, featured a tribute video and reflections on Baylor's life and contributions. With his name now adorning the arena, The College of Idaho has cemented Baylor's role in both the school's athletic and social history. The move symbolizes more than just athletic achievement, it honors the legacy of a man who fought for progress in and out of the basketball world, standing as a role model for current and future generations of students.

The arena naming event hit especially close to home for one men's basketball player, Utrillo Morris. Morris, who has become a key figure on the team, was able to follow in Baylor's footsteps and play for the College largely because of the Baylor Opportunity Fund, which made it possible for him to pursue his dream of playing basketball while receiving a quality education at The College of Idaho. The first recipient of the fund, Nimo Abdi from Boise, also exemplifies the impact the scholarship can have. A passionate microbiology student, Abdi is committed to using her knowledge to improve the world. Coming from an immigrant family, her story reflects the core values of the Baylor Opportunity Fund: to create access and empowerment for students from diverse backgrounds, both athletes and non-athletes.

With Baylor's name now attached to the arena, The College of Idaho continues its dedication to honoring his legacy. The fund and the renamed arena provide a lasting impact that bridges athletics, education, and social change, ensuring that Baylor's influence will continue to inspire future generations of Yotes for years to come.

## SEND US YOUR CLASS NOTES!

We want to hear about all the great things our alumni are doing! If you would like to submit a class note, please email [alumni@collegeofidaho.edu](mailto:alumni@collegeofidaho.edu) or call us at (208) 459-5004.

FRANCES NAGASHIMA '01 and BELÉN MEYERS '15 named by the Idaho Business Review as honorees of the 2025 Women of the Year awards.

### 1960s

DR. RON BITNER '68 is featured in the Idaho Public Television documentary *Beyond the Buzz*, about Idaho's bees. The film received two regional Emmy nominations: Environmental/Science Long-Form and Video Essayist.

### 1970s

GROVE KOGER '70 published a poetry chapbook, *Not*, with Finishing Line Press. His article "Staying On: Paul Bowles' Later Years in Tangier" appeared in *The Limberlost Review* (2024), and his short story "That Bittersweet Taste" was published in the *2024 Writers in the Attic* anthology *Tart*.

DAMIAN WILKERSON '75 was inducted into the 2024 Toledo City League Athletic Hall of Fame. A long-time educator and coach in Ventura County, California, he credited his championship-winning senior year at St. Francis de Sales High School in Toledo, Ohio and 30+ years of service in education as key to the honor.

CARL ANDERSON '78 was honored with a purple jacket at this year's College of Idaho Athletics' annual Go Purple steak feed fundraiser. Anderson and his crew of volunteers barbecue at every College of Idaho tailgate for the football and basketball teams.

### 1980s

At halftime during a February 2025 basketball game, the College honored DENNIS ROBERTSON '87 with a Presidential Medallion for his service on our Board of Trustees and his work helping young athletes develop personally and professionally through his and his wife Cheryl's company, Protocol International.

## IN MEMORIAM

The following alumni and friends of the College have passed away. When you learn of the death of a College of Idaho graduate, please email the information to [alumni@collegeofidaho.edu](mailto:alumni@collegeofidaho.edu).

### 1950s

Louie Attebery '50  
Eugene Holsinger '53  
Patricia Holsinger '53  
Edward Heath '55  
Roger Reynoldson '56  
William Weaver '58  
Edwin Lloyd '59  
Donald Romer '59

### 1960s

Elizabeth Kindschy '61  
Robert King '61  
Christian Eismann '61  
Dan Pero '61  
William Gillam '61  
Richard Green '62  
Carole Hesse '62  
Dean Barnhouse '62  
Ronald Lopez Devinaspere '63  
Kyleene Perry '65

Larry Cope '66  
Shirley Lappens '68  
Karl Willig '68  
Nancy Rankin '69

### 1970s

Ron Broker '70  
Nadine Maggard '70  
Janice Durbin '72  
Roger Price '72  
Scott Hoover '75  
Gordon Baker '77

### 1980s

Steven Symms '88

### 1990s

Roberto Vasquez '91  
Marilyn A Eastepp '92

### 2010s

Brittany Davis '15

### Founder's Society & Heritage Society

Louie Attebery '50  
Larry Cope '66  
Judy Buffington

### Employees/

#### Previous Employees

Louie Attebery '50  
Christian Eismann '61  
Nadine Maggard '70

### Emeritus Trustees

Louie Attebery '50

### Previous Trustees

Eugene Holsinger '53  
Larry Cope '66  
Steven Symms '88

DEIDRA KRYSS-RUSOFF '89 was honored this spring by long-time friends and colleagues at Willamette View with the establishment of a scholarship in her name at the College. The scholarship will be awarded to students with financial need and preferably to those with demonstrated leadership inside and outside of the classroom. Kryss-Rusoff represents all things College of Idaho and her legacy will carry on through this scholarship.

### 1990s

On February 4, 2025, G.P. Putnam's Sons published CHRISTOPHER FARNSWORTH'S '93 novel *Robert B. Parker's Buried Secrets*. This is the 22nd book about the character Jesse Stone, created Robert B. Parker. Farnsworth has been chosen by the Parker estate to continue the Jesse Stone series and is currently at work on the 23rd book.

MICHAEL PEARSON '97 serves as Deputy Director of Operations at the Idaho Department of Health & Welfare, where he oversees procurement, IT, facilities, compliance, internal audit, and licensing for the state's largest executive branch agency. His work supports the department's top priority: improving child welfare outcomes by streamlining the systems behind frontline services.

### 2000s

KYLE SALES '03 was named CFO of the College in the fall of 2024. He previously worked in public accounting and private equity and has been recognized as the College's Young Alumni of the Year and served on its National Alumni Board.

SUNRISE AYERS '03 became Executive Director of Idaho Legal Aid Services in November 2024. Since 2006, she has advanced from Staff Attorney to Managing Attorney and then Deputy Director. She leads efforts supporting low-income clients and vulnerable populations in Idaho.

In June 2025, the Treasure Valley Family YMCA awarded ALEX ZAMORA '06 its 2025 Vern Emery Award, its highest honor, for his compassion and commitment for serving the Wilder, Idaho community (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPA-E43nJWo>)

### 2010s

ALI RABE '10 was recognized by the Idaho Business Review as a 2025 CEO of Influence, reflecting her impressive leadership of the nonprofit Jesse Tree, which focuses on keeping families housed, preventing eviction, and helping build a better community.

MELISSA PICKETT '11 joined the College as an assistant professor of biology in the fall of 2024. After earning her Ph.D. in

Toxicology from North Carolina State University, she conducted postdoctoral research at Stanford University and taught at San Jose State University.

KELSEY NELSON '15 was appointed in February 2025 by Governor Brad Little to the Serve Idaho Commission. Nelson earned her Master of Education from University of Buffalo and currently works as a senior integrated career educational specialist at Boise State University.

After earning his Doctor of Dental Medicine and Master of Business Administration from Roseman University in 2022 and completing an AEGD (Advanced Education in General Dentistry) residency in 2023, JOSHUA KABBINS '17 now practices dentistry in Hardin, Montana.

In 2024, ANNIIKA THOMAS '19, a PhD candidate at MIT's Aerospace Controls Laboratory specializing in robotic perception, gave a visionary TEDx talk unveiling a path to permanent habitation on the lunar surface (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I07Ccta4cBY>).

### 2020s

After playing one year at Idaho State University and four seasons at The College of Idaho, JAKE O'NEIL '23, a Fruitland, Idaho native, has signed to play for the Sun Devils at Arizona State University as his NCAA climb continues.

# UPCOMING EVENTS



THURSDAY-SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17-20, 2025  
**HOMECOMING & FAMILY  
 WEEKEND 2025**

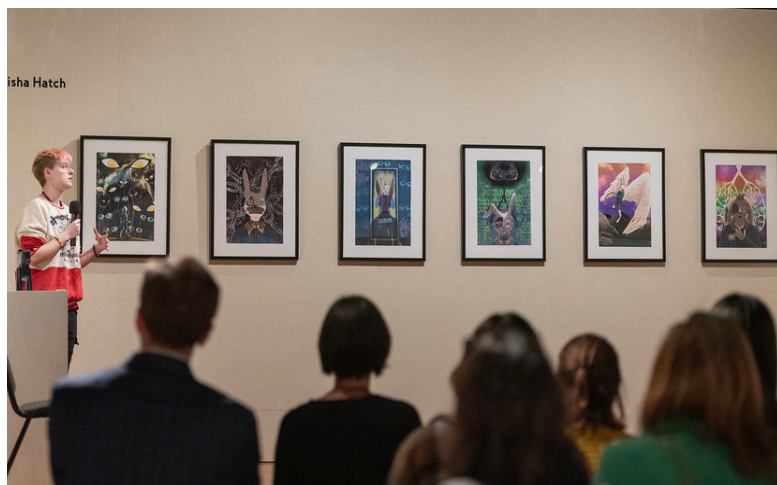
DECEMBER 2025  
**HOLIDAY CONCERT**

FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 2026  
**SCHOLARSHIP GALA**

FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 2026  
**BAD (BUSINESS & ACCOUNTING  
 DEPARTMENT) CONFERENCE**

FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 2026  
**GO PURPLE STEAK FEED**

MONDAY, MAY 15, 2026  
**STUDENT RESEARCH CONFERENCE**



HELP THE COLLEGE FULFILL ITS SUSTAINABILITY GOALS.  
 LET US KNOW IF YOU ARE WILLING TO RECEIVE OUR  
 QUEST MAGAZINE DIGITALLY IN THE FUTURE BY  
 SENDING AN EMAIL TO: [ALUMNI@COLLEGEOFIDAHO.EDU](mailto:ALUMNI@COLLEGEOFIDAHO.EDU)

# QUEST

The College of Idaho

2112 Cleveland Blvd  
Caldwell, ID 83605



20  
25

Every January, students take flight to experience and learn about different parts of the globe through uniquely crafted “study away” opportunities with College faculty. In 2025, a group of students traveled to Hong Kong with business professors Marilyn Melchiorre and Andrew Ellestad. “As I watched our students peppering local business leaders with career, business and life questions over a local Cantonese cuisine, I couldn’t help but think, “This is why we teach,” says Ellestad. “Our study abroad trip wasn’t just about lectures and assignments—it was about students bargaining in local markets, chatting with business owners over bubble tea, and finding their way through bustling streets together. You should’ve seen how quickly they grew from hesitant travelers to confident global explorers who could navigate subway systems and cultural differences with equal ease. This is what college is really about—pushing boundaries, discovering yourself in unfamiliar places, and bringing that growth back to enrich our entire campus community.”



**MORE!**

Find **MORE** ways to study! Visit: <https://shorturl.at/KX08q>

Quest is published by The College of Idaho. Copyright 2025. All rights reserved. Editorial offices are located in Sterry Hall, 2112 Cleveland Boulevard, Caldwell, ID 83605-4432 | 208-459-5219 | [communications@collegeofidaho.edu](mailto:communications@collegeofidaho.edu). Opinions expressed in Quest are those of the individual author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The College of Idaho administration or the Board of Trustees.

The College of Idaho admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

[www.collegeofidaho.edu/non-discrimination](http://www.collegeofidaho.edu/non-discrimination)