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University of Idaho Blue Ribbon Committee Funds Five New Strategic Initiatives – Programs Share in Five-year, \$5.5 Million Investment Fund

MOSCOW, Idaho – Five significant, integrative new initiatives have been selected to share in a five-year, \$5.5 million strategic investment program at the University of Idaho. The announcement of funded projects culminates a year-long effort by the university to reinvest in strategic and multidisciplinary academic areas. The initiatives were recommended to University of Idaho Provost and Executive Vice President Doug Baker by the university's Blue Ribbon Committee, and were judged to hold high promise to advance excellence in key thematic areas identified last year in University of Idaho President Timothy P. White's Plan for Renewal.

"The Blue Ribbon reinvestment process led to intense discussions across the university about how teams of faculty could bring their skills and experiences together to address strategic issues for the state and university," said UI Provost Doug Baker. "Forty-three proposals were received, all of which contained meritorious ideas. Many of these proposed projects will be competitive in seeking external funding from other sources. The Committee had a daunting task choosing the final groups, but did an admirable job. I thank the committee members for their long hours and unbiased approach to the selection process."

The funded initiatives and team leaders are:

- "Water of the West: Towards a Sustainable, Interdisciplinary Water Resources Program," \$1.6 million over five years to a team of 25 faculty, led by Jan Boll, associate professor of Agricultural Engineering, to launch a water resources graduate program.

- “Nanomaterials for Basic and Applied Cell Biology,” \$1.6 million over five years to a team of seven faculty, led by Dave McIlroy, associate professor of Physics, to establish an interdisciplinary program to integrate nanomaterials research with cell biology and bioscience research.
- “Building Sustainable Communities: A New University and Community Partnership,” \$1.6 million over five years to a team of 13 faculty and staff, led by Steve Drown, chair of the Landscape Architecture Department, and Steve Hollenhorst, chair of the Conservation Social Sciences Department. The initiative will establish an academic program in bioregional planning and community design; outreach to communities with sustainable community planning and development; and training for elected officials and professionals to plan and manage community resources for sustainable futures.
- “Sustainable Idaho: Learning Together, Leading the Way,” \$450,000 over five years. Maxine Dakins, associate professor of Environmental Science, and Chris Dixon, academic and administrative coordinator of the Environmental Science Program, will lead a team of faculty, staff and students to bring institutional sustainability to the university and to communities throughout the state.
- “Idaho Professional Ethics Initiative,” \$225,000 over five years to Douglas Lind, professor of Philosophy and chair of the Philosophy Department, to coordinate a campuswide interdisciplinary program related to professional ethics, diversity and social justice.

White initiated the strategic investment effort in his February 2005 Plan for Renewal of People, Programs and Place. The investment comes from prioritizing and redirecting existing general funds, and will be supplemented by private gifts and endowments. The Blue Ribbon Committee was formed to select multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary teams of faculty, staff and students who

developed proposals for initiatives that could deliver positive and lasting impacts across the breadth of the university to better serve the state and beyond.

The Blue Ribbon committee received 43 pre-proposals last fall, and the committee invited eight projects to submit final proposals. Each proposal was read, ranked and discussed by the 11-member committee, and critiqued by three peer reviewers from outside the University of Idaho.

“We are excited to see how the energy and passion of our committed faculty, students and staff will help transform the university,” said Margrit von Braun, dean of the College of Graduate Studies and chair of the Blue Ribbon Committee. “These projects reflect the excellence and innovation that distinguishes the University of Idaho.”

The funded proposals will begin implementation this summer and the five recipients will make presentations to the university community in the fall to detail their project plans.

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About the University of Idaho

Founded in 1889, the University of Idaho is the state’s flagship higher-education institution and its principal graduate education and research university, bringing insight and innovation to the state, the nation and the world. The only institution in the state earning the prestigious Carnegie Foundation ranking for high research activity, University of Idaho researchers attract more than \$100 million in research grants and contracts each year. UI’s student population includes first-generation college students and ethnically diverse scholars. Its high academic performers include 34 National Merit Scholars and a 2005-06 freshman class with an average high school grade point average of 3.42. Offering 106 degree options in nine colleges, UI combines the strengths of a large university with the intimacy of small learning communities. For information, visit www.uidaho.edu.