March 8, 2010

To University of Idaho Community,

The quality of the University of Idaho's academic programs is a hallmark of this institution. It draws both bright and engaging students and top-flight faculty and researchers to the Gem State and enhances the ability of our land-grant institution to succeed in its mission of teaching, research and scholarly activity, and outreach.

At the heart of our undergraduate programs resides the University's general education curriculum, which marks a decade this year in its current configuration. National universities of our caliber recognize the need to assess the effectiveness of their programs and undertake comprehensive reviews of critical curricula on a regular basis. It is time that we undertake a complete and thorough review of this fundamental curriculum, to ensure that we are providing the best educational experience for our undergraduate students and that we have the structure, processes and resources in place to administer this vital part of the curriculum. This review is also timely as we position the University for its future as we engage with the State Board of Education/University Board of Regents in its planning process, address the revised accreditation standards recently adopted by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities and continue to implement the University Strategic Action Plan.

I have asked Dean Kathy Aiken, College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences, and Dean Scott Wood, College of Science, to provide leadership and vision to this process. They will be supported in this work by Vice Provosts Jeanne Christiansen and Bruce Pitman who will continue their focus on the co-curricular and student support programs essential for student success. This team will be both strategic and broad as it leads and undertakes the comprehensive review of our general education curriculum this year to include all aspects of general education, ranging from orientation to retention efforts.

Through an open and thoughtful process, we will invite you to engage in the general education review process during the coming weeks and months. A series of initial meetings will explore best practices in general education curriculum; assess the state of general education at the University; identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for general education; and review the findings and identify next steps. The comprehensive process will follow our internal review processes, working through our faculty and committee structures, and will ultimately yield a general education proposal for review and adoption by the University community with a goal for implementation for fall 2011.

I appreciate the leadership of Deans Aiken and Wood and ask for your support and engagement in this effort. Through processes such as this, the University of Idaho again demonstrates its commitment to student success and leadership.

Sincerely,

Doug Baker
Provost and Executive Vice President

To enrich education through diversity, the University of Idaho is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.