

Nov. 13, 2018: Meeting our Mission in Uncertain Times

Dear Colleagues,

As the university works through a presidential transition, we find ourselves in an uncertain and challenging environment. It is perhaps more important now than ever to stay focused on doing a few specific things very well rather than getting distracted by things that aren't our highest priorities. It is also very important to be mindful of how we work together to achieve our goals. We all must be kind to each other, remembering why we are here.

A group of 150 university leaders met last May to discuss moving the university forward and recommended these very things — stay focused on the highest priorities and be kind to one another. We are all on the same team, working toward the same goals, guided by an absolute commitment to the success of our students. We must continue to work together in a respectful way to move the University of Idaho forward, despite the transitional issues we face.

Our focus this year, consistent with our land grant mission, is to serve our current and prospective students so they thrive at the University of Idaho and graduate in a timely fashion. Many would call this focus “student success” but the idea goes beyond quantitative success measures such as retention or graduation rates. Student success means our students are heard and respected and our faculty and staff are actively looking for opportunities to interact and communicate with our students in ways that the students understand, accept and find meaningful. We are certainly doing well in many areas, but we need to be vigilant and willing to accept that there are areas where we need to improve. We have rolled out another round of Vandals Ideas Project funding that will focus on student success at the University of Idaho. This is an important and impactful effort we hope to see grow.

While we are keenly focused on student success, we have other unfinished business to address. My staff and I sent many memos last year speaking to ongoing or new initiatives. We have posted them to the Provost's web page for your convenience. Many of the activities

you'll find on our website will be slowed down or put on hold this year as we focus elsewhere. We have included a status update and plan for these various projects, realizing that we cannot do everything at once. Some items must remain active given ongoing State Board of Education requirements and expectations (e.g. Program Prioritization refresh and budget/carryforward adjustments due to declining enrollment).

We are rapidly coming to close of the fall semester. I intend to provide more frequent updates via email as a means to augment my communication via weekly faculty senate meetings. As always, please don't hesitate to send an email to provost@uidaho.edu if you have questions or subjects that you would like me to address.

We have much to accomplish and I am confident we can continue our forward momentum, working together and being mindful of the reason we do what we do every day — to serve our students, the state of Idaho and the world via education, research and outreach.

Best Wishes,
John

John M. Wiencek
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