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Idaho's iDeal College Savings Program Ranked Among Nation's Best *Morningstar Praises iDeal 529 Plan, Elevates Rating to Bronze*

(Boise) – Morningstar Inc., a leading independent investment data and research firm, has upgraded its rating of iDeal – Idaho's 529 College Savings Program, praising the program's minimal fee structure and the board responsible for oversight.

In its ["Top 529 College Savings Plans of 2020"](#) analysis, Morningstar elevated its analyst rating of iDeal from neutral to bronze. Idaho was one of five states upgraded to the Bronze category, according to the report.

"This is terrific news for Idaho's 529 plan and the work so many are doing to make this program successful for Idaho parents and their children," said Julie Ellsworth, Idaho State Treasurer and Board Chair for the iDeal program.

"Idaho's constitutional officers work together on this board to make sound decisions that are focused on providing account holders with value and confidence in the investment they are making in the educational futures of their children," Ellsworth said. "It should also be noted that iDeal's tax deduction for individuals and the new employer tax credit offer Idaho families and businesses additional incentives that are among the best in the nation."

Chicago-based Morningstar started analyzing 529 plans eight years ago, but modified its methodology this year in a way that leveled the playing field by treating all plans equally. Previously, the evaluation process put less emphasis on the fees charged by advisor-sold plans. The enhanced methodology now puts emphasis on four key pillars:

- **Process:** Refers to whether an experienced financial management firm has been hired to oversee assets and can provide a diversified set of age-based investment portfolios.
- **People:** Refers to whether the investment manager is a good steward of investor capital and the underlying investment strategies are strong.
- **Parent:** Considers whether the state trustee and its partners put education savers first.
- **Price:** Compares the fee structure of 529 plan programs.

"The iDeal – Idaho College Savings Program stacks up favorably under our enhanced methodology," Morningstar wrote in its analysis. "The diligence of the plan's state stewards further sets this plan apart, warranting an upgrade to a Morningstar Analyst Rating of Bronze."

For the 2020 ratings, Morningstar analysts assigned ratings to 61 plans that span 97 percent of the more than \$363 billion invested in 529 programs across the country as of August 31. Just three state plans earned Gold ratings, while 11 earned Silver ratings and 21 were placed in the Bronze category. Another 18 plans were rated neutral, while eight received a negative rating.

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About IDeal – Idaho College Savings Program

IDeal's office is located within the State Treasurer's office. IDeal is administered by the State College Savings Program Board. Ascensus Broker Dealer Services, LLC serves as Program Manager. The State College Savings Board consists of the following members:

- State Treasurer Julie Ellsworth, Board Chair
- Governor Brad Little (Greg Wilson, designee)
- State Controller Brandon Woolf (Patrick Hodges, designee)
- Attorney General Lawrence Wasden (Brian Kane, designee)
- Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra (Louie Konkol, designee)
- Secretary of State Lawrence Denney (Chad Houck, designee)

For more information, contact Christine Stoll at 208-332-2935, cstoll@idsaves.idaho.gov or visit www.idsaves.org.

For more information about the Idaho College Savings Program ("IDeal"), call 866-433-2533 or visit www.idsaves.org to obtain a Disclosure Statement. The Disclosure Statement discusses investment objectives, risks, charges, expenses, and other important information. Because investing in IDeal is an important decision for you and your family, you should read and consider the Disclosure Statement carefully before investing.

Before you invest, consider whether you're or the beneficiary's home state offers any state tax or other state benefits such as financial aid, scholarship funds and protection from creditors that are only available for investments in the that state's qualified tuition program.

IDeal is administered by the Idaho College Savings Program Board ("Board"). Ascensus Broker Dealer Services, LLC, the program manager, and its affiliates, have overall responsibility for the day-to-day operations, including investment advisory, recordkeeping and administrative services, and marketing. The Vanguard Group, Inc. ("Vanguard") serves as Investment Manager for IDeal. Sallie Mae Bank serves as the Savings Portfolio Manager for IDeal. IDeal's Portfolios invest in either: (i) mutual funds and a separate account offered or managed by Vanguard; or (ii) an FDIC-insured omnibus savings account held in trust by the Board at Sallie Mae Bank. Except for the Savings Portfolio, investments in IDeal are not insured by the FDIC. Units of the Portfolios are municipal securities and the value of units will vary with market conditions.

Investment returns will vary depending upon the performance of the Portfolios you choose. Except to the extent of FDIC insurance available for the Savings Portfolio, you could lose all or a portion of your money by investing in IDeal, depending on market conditions. Account Owners assume all investment risks as well as responsibility for any federal and state tax consequences.

Not FDIC-Insured (except for the Savings Portfolio). No Bank, State or Federal Guarantee. May Lose Value.