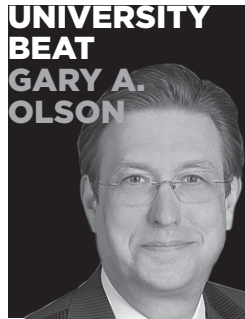


ISU-Meridian does impressive research

I recently had the pleasure of attending the grand opening of the new Idaho State University Health Science Center in Meridian, just off of Interstate 84 in the heart of the Treasure Valley. As I toured the research labs, clinics and new L.S. Skaggs Pharmacy Complex, I could clearly see the impact ISU-Meridian will have on the Treasure Valley, Idaho and beyond.

Last May, ISU graduated its largest class ever in the Treasure Valley—awarding more than 150 degrees in the health professions. This fall, more than 720 students and working professionals are enrolled in academic and professional development programs—a 52 percent increase over last year at this time.

By offering more than 20 graduate and undergraduate programs in the health sciences, ISU-Meridian is easing the critical shortage of health care professionals nationwide. Our students are often courted by major hospitals, clinics and health care organizations before the ink is dry on their diplomas, illustrating the continuing demand for health care professionals, both in Idaho and nationally. According to the Idaho Department of Labor, jobs in the health care sector—with pharmacy and nursing leading the pack—will be in high demand through 2016. Keeping that in mind, I am pleased to report that the Skaggs Pharmacy Complex will graduate its first class in 2013.



ISU-Meridian is also home to the only fast-track Bachelor of Science in Nursing program in Idaho, graduating up to 30 nurses every 16 months. The fast-track program allows promising students who already have bachelor's degrees in other fields to earn a bachelor of science in nursing. The program is rigorous and highly-competitive.

ISU-Meridian faculty members are equally engaged in health-related research. Since July 2008, faculty members have received more than \$2.5 million in research grants and contracts. The scope is vast—from studies of traumatic brain injury and teen tobacco use to how best to control infectious diseases, such as HIV and AIDS.

ISU-Meridian researcher Russ Spearman, for example, was recently awarded a \$1 million grant by the Health Resources and Services Administration to develop a support network for the 35,000 Idahoans living with severe traumatic brain injuries.

Many of these people have exhausted their health insurance benefits and are unable to work full time. Spearman and his team of researchers are exploring the creation of a trust fund to ease the financial burden associated with the transition from acute care to independent living.

Another ISU-Meridian researcher, Dr. Galen Louis, has garnered a \$240,000 grant from the American

Legacy Foundation to develop an anti-tobacco campaign targeting Hispanic teens in western Idaho's Canyon County. The Centers for Disease Control reports tobacco use among Idaho's Hispanic teens is significantly higher than their non-Hispanic peers.

Of course, ISU-Meridian faculty are engaged in a wide range of research, not just health-related investigations. Take, for example, geosciences professor Nancy Glenn. She is conducting exciting research using remote sensing technologies—the use of sophisticated cameras attached to aircraft—and geologic engineering to study the Earth's surface.

Her work is helping scientists, ranchers and government agencies control invasive weed infestations, which have the potential to destroy wildlife habitats and croplands. She has collaborated with researchers worldwide and has received more than \$2 million in funding from such agencies as the National Science Foundation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Bureau of Land Management.

These are just three examples of the impressive research under way at ISU-Meridian—research that can be put to use in the real world immediately, improving the lives of everyone. Clearly, ISU faculty on all of its campuses are continuing to make a difference, not only in Idaho but nationally.

Gary A. Olson is provost and vice president at Idaho State University.