

Grants highlight quality of ISU research

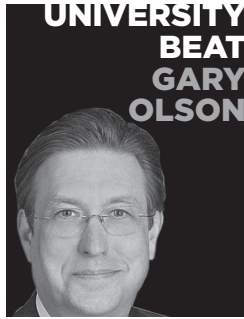
In September, Idaho State University researchers from various disciplines across campus, from nuclear engineering to health care, brought in \$8.2 million in federal grants to the university.

It was an unprecedented month in what is shaping up to be a banner year for researchers at ISU. During the previous fiscal year, ISU faculty brought in more than \$28 million in external funding.

Especially in tight economic times, research dollars from outside agencies provide a much-needed flow of funding to important programs. But these research dollars are worth far more than their monetary amount, in that often they fund projects that directly help improve our communities and our quality of life.

Institute of Rural Health Director Beth Hudnall Stamm, for example, was awarded one and a half million dollars, a third of which was released to the University in September, to fund projects aimed at preventing youth suicide in Idaho.

This federal funding will help support crucial suicide prevention efforts to reduce suicide among youth between the ages of 10 and 24. Projects will include training adults to identify warning signs of suicide in children and teens, supporting volunteer organizations, providing prevention materials to schools, and assisting public safety, health and mental health providers in conduct-



ing suicide risk assessments.

Professor Judy Thorne, ISU-Meridian's HIV/AIDS education coordinator, has been awarded \$126,000 in federal grant money to aid Idaho health professionals and practitioners in the detection and prevention of HIV and AIDS in Idaho. The grant

will be used to train practitioners to administer a field test for HIV that can offer results within 20 minutes, and to operate a mobile HIV clinic and education site for at-risk populations. Since the grant's inception in 2004, this funding has helped support the training of more than 2,000 health professionals.

Federal agencies awarded 16 grants to ISU faculty in September. One was awarded to history professor Jack Owens, who received nearly one and a third million dollars for his work on "geographically integrated" history. The Idaho Accelerator Center, where scientists from laboratories nationwide come to conduct cutting-edge research, earned more than \$3 million in grants. Our Department of Physics was awarded three grants worth nearly two million dollars, and the nuclear engineering program in the College of Engineering garnered more than a half million dollars in federal support.

Especially impressive is the work of Mary Lou Dunzik-Gougar, assistant professor of nuclear engineering. She received nearly a half million dollars for research

that would enable safer and less expensive disposal of irradiated graphite waste, or possibly allow for the recycling of the material. Because many of the designs for the next generation of nuclear reactors require graphite, her research is crucial to what will certainly become a part of the discussion as scientists continue their quest for cheaper, safer ways to generate energy.

Professor Dunzik-Gougar's research will take place largely at the Idaho National Laboratory and the Center for Advanced Energy Studies in Idaho Falls. She recently returned from a year in South Africa, where she conducted research for a company that is currently developing the next-generation reactor design—one that includes graphite as a crucial component.

The fact that ISU faculty are attracting record levels of federal funding is a tribute to the quality of their work and an indication of the increasing national reputation of many of our faculty. And as that reputation grows, so will the levels of federal funding.

Clearly, this is impressive research, but it is only a sampling of the fine work being conducted by ISU faculty. From energy to health care innovations, Idaho State University faculty are at the forefront of work that will help us solve key problems and improve our world.

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