Pharmacy to add 20 additional PharmD seats

ISU Meridian campus undergoes major renovations for expansion of programs

By Joseph F. Steiner, Pharm.D.

Education in nursing, medicine, pharmacy and other health professions is in very high demand because of predicted national shortages for practitioners in these areas. In Idaho, the Department of Labor understandably lists nursing as the profession with highest demand under their long-term projections. However, what may not be as predictable is that pharmacy is listed as the second profession. Why pharmacy? Why are 90 new pharmacists needed in Idaho each year? The profession of pharmacy has become hot for a number of reasons. Pharmacists don’t just take drugs from a large bottle and place them in a small bottle; pharmacy technicians now primarily handle that function, and their field is a growing area of employment in its own right. The scope of pharmacy practice made a planned, major shift, starting approximately 20 years ago. The focus shifted from the product, the drugs, to an increased focus on the outcomes of medication use, in making sure each individual patient received the best results from his or her medication regimen. The roles for pharmacists have continued to expand since.

In many healthcare settings you may find a pharmacist managing the drug therapy of your blood pressure, cholesterol, blood thinning, diabetes and many other conditions. Many medical specialists will not practice at a hospital or clinic unless they have a collaborating pharmacist in practice with them. Studies show there are better outcomes and substantial savings in healthcare management when a pharmacist manages these conditions.

Renovations are underway at the new ISU Health Sciences building in Meridian where the College will offer the full PharmD program beginning this fall at the L.S. Skaggs Pharmacy Complex.
more people are at the age that more medications are prescribed. More drug stores have opened to meet those needs and they need more pharmacists. These factors, plus the aging of current pharmacists, have increased the need for more new pharmacists.

So, what does it take to become a pharmacist? Pharmacy education is similar to medical education. It is a four-year professional program leading to a doctor of pharmacy degree. Like medicine, the first years of the curriculum are primarily classroom-based with some introductory practice experiences, followed by the last full year of advanced practice experiences or internships. A new student completes a minimum of three years of pre-pharmacy college coursework before being admitted to pharmacy school. She will have to have a strong education in biology, chemistry, communications and math. I say "she" because well over 50 percent of the students entering the profession are women. She will also have the wherewithal, determination and work ethic to succeed in a demanding program of study. Also, similar to medicine, and the other health professions, and given the low faculty-to-student ratio and costly equipment, education in pharmacy is expensive. Students pay a substantial student fee in addition to regular tuition to cover these costs.

The Idaho State University College of Pharmacy is the only pharmacy education program in the state. In 2008, we celebrated 90 years since its founding. The school provides high-quality education in pharmacy and the sciences in training Idaho citizens for Idaho jobs.

We are addressing Idaho’s pharmacist shortage by increasing enrollment, but this is not an easy answer. We need facilities for teaching and practice opportunities and additional faculty are needed to conduct teaching. All are expensive. Faculty are in short supply, since they are in high-demand at new pharmacy schools opening in response to the national shortage of pharmacists. Also, many qualified faculty may earn much higher salaries at other colleges of pharmacy.

ISU admits 60 students into the pharmacy program annually. The College has limited space in Leonard Hall on the ISU campus in Pocatello, and cannot accommodate more students at this site. Student practice experiences sites in eastern Idaho have been saturated to the extent that 30 percent of the third-year students must complete the last two years of their education in the Treasure Valley. The College has had a presence in the Treasure Valley since the 1970’s, and it makes sense to expand class size by using the well-developed capabilities of ISU’s distance learning to offer the complete program. This concept is similar to the distributive model for the medical degree program proposed by ISU President Arthur Vailas.

However, expansion in the Treasure Valley could not have become a reality without the generous support of The ALSAM Foundation, founded by L.S. “Sam” and Aline Skaggs. Sam Skaggs is the father of modern retail pharmacy and his Skaggs’ Drug Stores were well known. The Skaggs family has strong roots in Idaho with their retail activity starting in American Falls. They have endowed the College with $5 million to construct the L.S. Skaggs Pharmacy Complex in the new Idaho State University – Meridian building.

This complex will provide excellent educational space where all four years of the program can be taught. The College’s class size will grow to 80 students entering the program annually, and we will have the physical capacity for future growth. We are currently accepting applications for the first cohort of students who will start their pharmacy education this fall at the new facility. The deadline for those applications is February 1, 2009, and may be found online at pharmacy.isu.edu.

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ISU College of Pharmacy Dean Joe Steiner, left, tours the L.S. Skaggs Pharmacy Complex in the ISU Meridian Health Sciences building with faculty member Sam Hoagland. The ALSAM Foundation endowed $5 million towards the construction of the pharmacy complex.

The L.S. Skaggs Pharmacy Complex - ISU Meridian

The L.S. Skaggs Pharmacy Complex in the Idaho State University Meridian building will consist of:

- Three distance learning classrooms
- Compounding laboratory with 24 stations
- Physical assessment dispensing lab
- Research laboratory and isolation room
- Student lounge, 8 case study rooms
- Three lab support rooms
- 21 faculty offices

Naming opportunities are available. Please contact Dan Dean, director of development at 208-282-3655 or dandean@pharmacy.isu.edu.
When natural light beams through the windows of Idaho State University’s new health-sciences building in Meridian next year, the interior lights will automatically dim. If it’s cloudy outside, the lights will brighten.

“It's called daylight harvesting,” says Ed Daniels, the building’s principal architect and an owner of Hummel Architects PLLC of Boise.

Daylight-harvesting is just one of numerous eco-friendly features Daniels and his team are incorporating into the design and renovation of the 102,000 square-foot building located north of Interstate-84 between Locust Grove and Meridian roads. Scheduled to open late next summer, the building will house ISU’s Treasure Valley health-professions programs, science laboratories, administrative offices, clinics and allow for expansion of the pharmacy program.

In daylight harvesting, photo sensors detect the amount of natural light in a space and adjust the level of electrical lighting to create a balance. The process conserves electricity and lowers energy costs, says Daniels.

Another energy-saving feature is a direct digital control management system — or DDC—that'll allow maintenance workers to monitor and adjust interior temperatures from an off-site location. A 2006 international study conducted by China’s Beijing Institute of Civil Engineering and Architecture notes a DDC system can cut gas and electrical consumption rates by 20 to 50 percent in some buildings.

Also included in the new digs will be a high-performance HVAC — or heating, ventilation and air conditioning system—that will control the amount of fresh air entering the building, limiting the unnecessary heating and cooling of outside air. New carpet and floor tiles will be made of recycled materials that meet green initiatives established by the construction and architectural industries.

But Daniels and ISU campus architect Denton Dance agree the building’s most sustainable feature is the fact the university is taking an existing building -- the electronics manufacturing area of the former Jabil Circuit building -- and adapting it to fit the needs of Idaho State. Another option would’ve been to construct a brand new building on a plot of bare land.

“Not only have we saved money on demolition costs, we’ve limited the amount of debris added to landfills and been able to recycle or salvage materials from the original structure. That’s important when you talk about sustainability,” says Daniels.

ISU has recouped approximately $92,000 from the salvage of materials that couldn’t be used in the renovation.

“We hope to apply that money toward other project costs,” says Dance.

Chris Gabettas

Capital Matrix grant helps provide top quality laboratory equipment for pharmacy

The L.S. Skaggs Pharmacy Complex in the new Idaho State University Meridian building will host state-of-the-art laboratory equipment for pharmacy student research, in part, by a generous donation from the Capital Matrix Community Initiative Grant Program. The company awarded the College $27,635 towards the purchase of two Clean Air Laminar Flow Stations used for general compounding work, and the preparation of dangerous compounds, such as chemotherapy drugs.

During drug preparation, a variety of manipulations are performed which may result in aerosol generation, spraying, and splattering. Pharmaceutical practice calls for the use of aseptic techniques and a sterile environment. Many pharmacies provide this sterile environment by using a horizontal laminar flow workbench.

However, while this type of unit provides product protection, it may expose the operator and the other room occupants to aerosols generated during drug preparation. Therefore, for the preparation of dangerous compounds, a Class II laminar flow (vertical) biological safety cabinet that provides both product and operator protection is also needed.

Both the horizontal and vertical Clean Air Laminar Flow Stations are critically important to the safety and functionality of the pharmacy lab. It is important that students are trained on the same state-of-the-art equipment used by pharmacists in actual compounding laboratories and therefore, must have access to the safest and most current equipment available.

“Capital Matrix has been promoting economic development and serving businesses throughout southwest Idaho since 1984. We are happy to be able to provide this grant to ISU to support continued business and job growth in our community,” said Deborah K. Brown, president, Capital Matrix.
Pharmacy student perspective:
Meridian campus offers additional opportunities

By Jo Kiester

ISU College of Pharmacy staff and students are looking forward with great anticipation to the opening of their new building in the Treasure Valley. In August of 2009, 20 students will begin their pharmacy education at the new ISU Health Sciences campus in Meridian. Renovations are underway at what was once the Jabil complex to prepare the building for incoming students. The ISU College of Pharmacy’s goals for the Meridian expansion are to meet the demand for pharmacists in Idaho, to alleviate crowding in the current facilities in Pocatello and Boise, and to allow more students to access the clinical pharmacy opportunities that the Treasure Valley provides.

Sam Skaggs and his wife, Aline, longtime advocates for pharmacy education, set up the ALSAM Foundation, which has traditionally assisted Colleges of Pharmacy across the western United States. ISU College of Pharmacy students are honored to have received this grant from the ALSAM Foundation, and an additional $250,000 endowed with the College for minority scholarships. The College’s new facility, the L.S. Skaggs Pharmacy Complex in Meridian, is named in honor of this generous gift.

Since the College of Pharmacy is outgrowing its current Boise site, faculty and students are looking forward to a more spacious facility. College of Pharmacy faculty are looking forward to new offices and more storage space; students will enjoy state-of-the-art distance learning facilities that will connect them to courses taught from the main campus in Pocatello. Other amenities include a student lounge, laboratories, library resources and seminar rooms.

Also attending the health science facility will be student nurse practitioners, audiology and paramedic students and many other health professions. In the not-too-distant future, the school will be the center of learning for approximately 700 students. The ISU College of Pharmacy will occupy 35,000 square feet of the second floor of the building.

Joining the 20 pharmacy students entering the program in Meridian will be 40 third- and fourth-year students. The entering class in Meridian will grow by ten students, while the entering class at the Pocatello campus will shrink by 10 students every year for the next two years. Eventually Pocatello and Meridian will have equal numbers of students in each class. This will expand the College of Pharmacy student body from the current 240 students to 310 students by 2013. Ultimately, it means an increase in the annual graduating class from the current 60 to 80 by 2014.

With the expansion of the student body at the new Meridian campus, the Treasure Valley will be seeing much more student activity in the form of outreach programs. These programs include Operations Diabetes, Immunization, Heartburn and Methamphetamine Awareness. The goal of these student-organized outreach efforts are to provide the community with health education and various patient services, such as flu shots and blood glucose checks.

Students and faculty alike of the ISU College of Pharmacy are looking forward to this expansion and to becoming a greater presence in the Treasure Valley. Look for events held by ISU College of Pharmacy outreach programs beginning the fall of 2009.

Jo Kiester is a second-year student with the ISU College of Pharmacy. She will attend her third year classes in the L.S. Skaggs Pharmacy Complex and will graduate with her PharmD in 2011. This editorial has been submitted to various news publications.

Construction underway at new ISU Meridian

Construction crews began working on renovations in 2008 of the ISU Meridian Health Sciences building located at 1303 E. Central Drive. Through the support of The ALSAM Foundation, the College is able to expand its class size from 60 to 80 students over the course of three years. Students will take classes in one of the three distance learning classrooms here with faculty members teaching from both the Pocatello and Meridian sites. Crews have been cutting in new windows, adding a second story and installing walls for offices, laboratories and conference rooms. The L.S. Skaggs Pharmacy Complex and other ISU health science programs will open for students in the fall 2009.