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Biomedical Advances: Researchers Collaborate Statewide to Treat Disease, Meet to Share Knowledge Gained

MOSCOW, Idaho – Critical research being conducted around the state of Idaho is advancing the understanding and treatment of human disease. Student and faculty researchers from the state's biomedical research community will gather in Moscow Aug. 6-8 for the sixth anniversary of a National Institutes of Health-funded network that has helped support student and faculty scholarship and research at colleges and universities statewide.

The 262 registrations for the annual conference signal the broad impact and support for the program, said Carolyn Hovde Bohach, a University of Idaho microbiologist who directs Idaho's IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE). Researchers from two NIH-funded Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) based at the University of Idaho also will participate.

"This year the INBRE conference has partnered with the NIH COBRE biomedical researchers in Idaho," Bohach said. "These INBRE and COBRE researchers are among the best in the country in their fields and they are making progress in understanding many diseases. These NIH programs help link colleagues throughout the state and increase their ability to compete for additional funding for their research."

"The positive impact this has on our scientists, our students who work with them, Idaho and our efforts to understand and treat human disease is tremendous," added Bohach, who is an expert on the disease-causing bacterium *E. coli* O157:H7.

The research conference will feature reports by scientists from Albertson College of Idaho, Boise State University, Brigham Young University – Idaho, College of Southern Idaho, Idaho State University, Lewis Clark State College, North Idaho College, Northwest Nazarene University, the Mountain States Tumor and Medical Research Institute, and the University of Idaho.

For 32 students from eight Idaho colleges and universities, the conference will showcase their 10-week summer research fellowships.

The topics include research on biomolecular nanowire sensors, bone health, drug resistance in bacteria, alcohol-related diseases, Alzheimer's disease, and infectious diseases.

Sometimes the scientists' make the arcane language of science simply alluring. University of Idaho cellular virologist Lee Fortunato will talk about birth defect causing human cytomegalovirus: "HCMV utilization of cellular p53: So many functions, so little time."

Idaho has received more than \$50 million since 2000 to build its biomedical research capacity and its scientists' competitiveness in securing other funding.

The funding from the NIH Institutional Development Award (IDeA) program and the National Center for Research Resources helped establish Idaho's IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence. The network offers support to researchers and students at 12 universities, colleges and research centers across the state.

The network provided support for 387 undergraduate students, 77 graduate students, 6 post-doctoral fellows and 200 faculty members through 2006.

NIH funding also established the two centers of biomedical research excellence on the University of Idaho campus, one devoted to infectious diseases and the other to evolutionary studies and bioinformatics.

The conference will be the first formal gathering of participants in the three major NIH-funded initiatives.

University of Idaho Biology Department head Larry Forney, who also directs the center focused on evolutionary studies and bioinformatics, will serve as the keynote speaker. His talk will be "Shift happens in biomedical research, too."

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About the University of Idaho

Founded in 1889, the University of Idaho is the state's flagship higher-education institution and its principal graduate education and research university, bringing insight and innovation to the state, the nation and the world. University researchers attract nearly \$100 million in research grants and contracts each year; the University of Idaho is the only institution in the state to earn the prestigious Carnegie Foundation ranking for high research activity. The university's student population includes first-generation college students and ethnically diverse scholars. Offering more than 150 degree options in 10 colleges, the university combines the strengths of a large university with the intimacy of small learning communities. For information, visit www.uidaho.edu.