

Idaho's first medical school welcomes students

On Wednesday morning, Tracy Farnsworth welcomed the first class of the Idaho College of Osteopathic Medicine, or ICOM, to the campus in Meridian.

“Many people in the medical profession ... will judge this school based on you,” Farnsworth, president of ICOM, said. “We invite you to step up, rise up and become the most capable doctors.”

ICOM, the first medical school in Idaho, begins classes Aug. 20. The school held an orientation on Wednesday that will continue to Friday, giving students a chance to meet the college's faculty and see the new three-story facility.

Construction on the new building, next to Idaho State University-Meridian off Interstate 84, was completed in June. A ribbon cutting is scheduled for Sept. 5.

ICOM students will earn a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree, or D.O., as opposed to a Doctor of Medicine degree, or M.D. Both groups are licensed physicians with similar schooling, training and practices, but their philosophies vary. Osteopathic medicine emphasizes holistic care and preventative treatment.

The first class has 162 students — 41 of whom are from Idaho. Yearly tuition is \$49,750, not including fees or other expenses. Students were not eligible for federal financial assistance because it is ICOM's first year. Seven students received \$5,000 scholarships from the ICOM scholarship fund.

Officials hope graduates from ICOM will fill the critical doctor shortage in Idaho, which ranks 49th for the number of physicians and 50th for primary care physicians per capita in the nation, according to Robert Hasty, ICOM's founding dean and chief academic officer.

Jacob Boyd, a Nampa native in ICOM's first class of students, hopes to practice medicine in Idaho after he graduates and completes his residency. Boyd, who has family in the Treasure Valley, hopes to raise his family here as well.

“I'm proud that (ICOM) is here in Idaho,” he said.

Michael Kushner moved from Arizona, where he was a personal trainer, to attend ICOM.

“My whole goal is to get people living longer and living comfortably longer,” Kushner said. “That ties into the whole osteopathic medicine as a whole versus treating one disease and trying to live healthier as long as you can.”

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