

# BSU receives \$1M for Musculoskeletal Center

By Janelle Brown

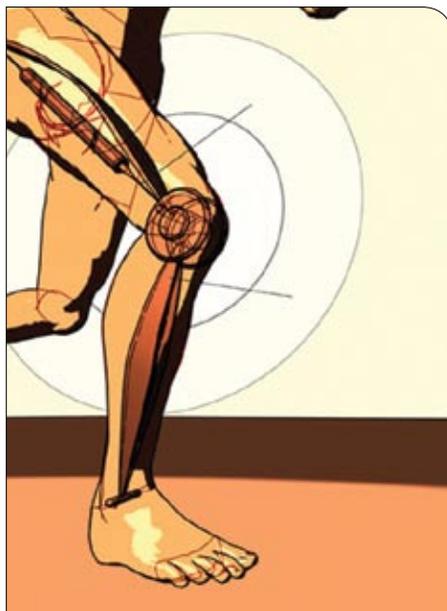
**E**arlier this summer Idaho's State Board of Education unanimously approved a \$1 million grant to Boise State to establish a major biomedical research center to coordinate studies on osteoarthritis, a disease that affects more than 30 percent of the U.S. population and costs \$124 billion each year to diagnose and treat.

The new Center for Musculoskeletal Research was selected for funding as part of a competitive statewide process that also included proposals from the University of Idaho and Idaho State University. A seven-member team of administrators and scientists from outside Idaho reviewed the proposals from Boise State and other universities and conducted on-site evaluations at each campus earlier this year. Following the visits, the team recommended to the State Board's Higher Education Research Council that the Boise State proposal be funded.

"The Center for Musculoskeletal Research will provide support, momentum and visibility for Boise State's growing biomolecular research programs, and it will also serve as a catalyst for new research collaborations," says Mark Rudin, vice president for research. "Our undergraduate and graduate students will benefit by working alongside faculty on new research projects."

The center brings together Boise State faculty in biology, engineering, kinesiology, computer science, chemistry and other fields for interdisciplinary research projects that range from molecular interactions to whole-body motions. In addition, the center will collaborate with the Boise medical community and other research institutions in Idaho and the nation on studies that could lead to new treatments for the devastating disease.

Strong support from Boise's medical community, along with outstanding faculty that are already engaged in interdisciplinary research, contributed to the success of Boise State's proposal, said Lee Weber, a University of Nevada-Reno professor and director



of that state's biomedical research network who was a member of the evaluation team.

"Because Idaho doesn't have a medical school, having strong support from local doctors is crucial if you're going to be able to conduct biomedical research," says Weber. "We were very impressed with the level of interest among doctors with whom we met."

Dr. Michael Coughlin, a Boise orthopedic surgeon and nationally recognized researcher on the foot and ankle, was among physicians who supported the new center. "Focusing research here in Boise and at Boise State makes good sense because we have the scientific researchers, the labs and equipment, and the know-how to get it done," Coughlin says. "You couple Boise State with the interest and involvement of the local medical community — this gives us a vibrant research platform."

Kinesiology professor Ron Pfeiffer will be director of the new center. Biology professor Julie Oxford, the principal investigator on the grant, will be the associate director for molecular and cellular processes, and mechanical and biomedical engineering professor Michelle Sabick will be the associate director for biomechanics. Eleven other Boise State faculty from a variety of disciplines are also affiliated with the center.

## BSU hosts two major scientific conferences

**M**ore than 800 scientists, faculty and students from eight Western states and several foreign countries converged on Boise State's campus in June for regional meetings of two major national scientific organizations.

The Northwest Region of the American Chemical Society and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Pacific Division met at BSU and the Boise Centre on the Grove for workshops, technical meetings and research presentations on topics ranging from sensor technology and advanced nuclear systems to animal behavior, wilderness issues, cancer treatments and infectious diseases.

Boise State hosted the AAAS division meeting, themed "Science for a Green Future," and was a contributing sponsor of the ACS regional meeting. Boise State science and engineering faculty played a prominent role in leading workshops, according to Owen McDougal, chair of the local AAAS organizing committee, and Jeffrey Peloquin, chair of the local Snake River Section of the ACS. Both McDougal and Peloquin are chemistry professors at Boise State.

A wide range of fields were represented at the meetings, including anthropology, earth sciences, engineering, physics, political science, chemistry, biochemistry and many others. Undergraduate and graduate students from many universities attended and presented research papers and posters that were evaluated by judges as part of a competition. Micron Technology Inc., the major sponsor of the ACS regional meeting, sponsored technical sessions on semiconducting materials.