

## The Journal of Business

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The issue dated March 20, 2008

### ISM names star-studded advisory panel

Strategic advisory board will set blueprint, recruit faculty for new institute

By [Richard Ripley](#)

The Institute for Systems Medicine Planning Authority has named a strategic advisory board of top national health-care research figures to help guide its efforts to set up an organization that will advance the application of and research into the latest forms of medicine in Spokane.

The planning authority says the new board will propose a blueprint for how the planned institute could interact with health-care providers and universities here to maximum effect and also will help recruit a chief scientific officer and other faculty members.

"The formation of this advisory board, comprised of extraordinary scientists and physicians, represents a significant milestone in the progress of the ISM and for the future success of biomedical research in Spokane," says Ryland "Skip" Davis, CEO of Providence Strategic Ventures and a member of the planning authority's board. Providence Strategic Ventures works to promote research and technology here and to expand the economic ventures of Providence Health Care, which owns Sacred Heart Medical Center and Holy Family Hospital.

The institute will focus on "systems medicine," which refers to using a systematic approach to study the myriad of human genetic abnormalities to determine the likelihood certain patients will contract disease and also to find new ways to combat and treat disease. Such possibilities have come to the fore since the mapping of the human genome was completed a few years ago, enabling science to hone in on what even slight abnormalities in the human body's 30,000 to 50,000 chromosomes might mean.

The planning authority says Huntington Willard, director of the Institute for Genome Sciences and Policy, at Duke University, will chair the new strategic advisory board. Willard participated in a review of the planning authority's plans last year by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which publishes Science magazine, says Lewis Rumpler, chief operating officer of the planning authority. He says one of the recommendations from that review was to form the strategic advisory board.

The other members of the panel are:

- Dr. Russ Altman, chairman of the department of bioengineering at Stanford University.
- Dr. David Altshuler, director of a program in medical and population genetics at the Broad Institute, a Cambridge, Mass., research collaborative of MIT, Harvard University and its affiliated hospitals, and the Whitehead Institute.
- J. Lyle Bootman, dean of the college of pharmacy at the University of Arizona. Rumpler says Bootman is a member of the National Academy of Science.
- Dr. Andrew Feinberg, professor of molecular medicine and director of the Epigenetics Center at Johns Hopkins University, in Baltimore, which calls itself the nation's first research university.
- Dr. Eddy Rubin, director of the U.S. Department of Energy's Joint Genome Institute, at Walnut Creek, Calif., which unites the efforts of five national laboratories in genome mapping, DNA sequencing, technology development, and information sciences. Rubin also is director of the genome division at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory.
- Barbara Trask, director of the human biology division at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center, in Seattle.

Rumpler says it's hoped that the panel will meet twice a year here and conduct conference calls in between those meetings. He says the panel likely will produce within 90 days an outline on how the institute should be set up to take advantage of the strengths provided by the presence here of Sacred Heart, Holy Family, Deaconess Medical Center, and Valley Hospital & Medical Center; Inland Northwest Health Services; schools such as Washington State University at Spokane, Gonzaga University, Whitworth University, and Eastern Washington University; and many health-care practitioners.

"We're trying to assist our community in getting on the wave of the tsunami that's coming; the tsunami is the way that medicine is going to be practiced in the future," Rumpler says.

The mapping of the human genome is erecting signposts for those who will blaze trails into medicine's new frontiers, Rumpler says. To follow those signposts, though, health-care practitioners and researchers need high-performance computers and access to numerous databases of information about patients, diseases, treatments, and outcomes, Rumpler says. He says the institute would provide those things, and it has been promoted as a way to attract biomedical scientists, engineers, computer scientists, mathematicians, and other experts to Spokane to help the health-care and education sectors search for new discoveries.

Doctors and hospitals, by providing a large population here of patients for studies to find how disease is caused by genetic differences—and how disease should be treated or deterred in light of those abnormalities—also will provide a significant ingredient for systems medicine, Rumpler says.

In addition to Davis, other new members of the planning authority's own board are Steve Duvoisin, CEO of Inland Imaging; John Gardner, WSU's Seattle-based vice president for economic development; retired longtime Avista Corp. executive and former Spokane Area Economic Development Council President Jon Eliassen; and Dr. Howard Kenney, medical director of Arthritis Northwest.

Other members of the authority's board are Spokane developer John Stone, who chairs the panel; Fred Brown, CEO of Next IT Corp.; Tom Paine, director of governmental relations at Avista Corp.; Elaine Couture, chief operating officer at Sacred Heart; and Stefan Humphries, medical director at St. Luke's Rehabilitation Institute.

Recently, the planning authority moved its offices to the Courtyard Office Park, Rumpler says.

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