

REMARKS TO OPERATION ORANGE – ENID, OKLAHOMA

By Andy Lester

Thank you, Dr. Shrum, for your kind introduction. As chairman of the Board of Regents for the Oklahoma Agricultural & Mechanical Colleges, which governs Oklahoma State University, let me say how proud we are of the College of Osteopathic Medicine. By producing primary care doctors for rural and underserved Oklahoma, it helps fulfill OSU's land grant mission.

I am especially thrilled to be here in Enid today. Enid holds a special place in my heart. My daughter, Susan, was born in Enid, and Barbara and I spent several years here, making the Wheat Capital our first long-term home. We have so many friends throughout Northwest Oklahoma and I am excited to be a part of Operation Orange.

Operation Orange, an initiative of the College of Osteopathic Medicine, seeks to reach out to college and high school students who may be interested in pursuing a medical career. You know, one of Oklahoma's most pressing needs is for physicians who practice outside of the two major metropolitan areas. At Oklahoma State University, we embrace this challenge.

In the last few years, we have implemented a number of efforts to recruit talented students from rural areas of the state to careers in medicine. We have actively partnered with FFA chapters across the state to locate students who are interested in becoming physicians. We have visited with students through 4-H, maintained a presence at the Oklahoma Youth Expo, and worked with the Oklahoma Farm Bureau and other rural organizations to identify and recruit these outstanding future

doctors.

We have implemented a rural health track in the medical curriculum for students interested in serving as primary care physicians in rural Oklahoma. The track takes third- and fourth-year students to rural areas of Oklahoma to complete rotations and has established internships and externships in rural hospitals and clinics across the state. We have also begun implementing a Rural and Underserved Primary Care Early Admissions Program so that undergraduates can cut a year out of their training.

Here is the exciting thing. Students – aspiring physicians – you can do it. You can become a physician. And you can have a wonderful, fulfilling career right here in Oklahoma. And the OSU College of Osteopathic Medicine can help you do it, and make it work financially.

You've taken the first step. I am glad you are here today.

Speak with Dr. Shrum and the others who are here from the
College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Thank you. And Go Pokes!