

"This small school ... has from the beginning emphasized empathy, flexibility and responsibility in the admissions decision," notes a recent report prepared for the American Association of Medical Colleges. "While Ben-Gurion's admission process is more time consuming than most schools ... the results are worth the effort."

And you don't have to be Jewish. At BGU, we take our obligation to serve all the people of the Negev very seriously. For that reason, we are now offering to promising Bedouin youngsters a prep program designed to make them fully-competitive candidates for admission to Israeli medical schools.

But student admissions is not the only way in which BGU is unique. Far from it.

At other medical schools, students take the Hippocratic Oath upon graduation. But at BGU, they take it upon enrollment.

There is a very good reason for that.

From day one, BGU medical students combine textbook learning with intensive instruction in clinical practice. They visit the hospital wards, accompany physicians to primary care clinics and work in emergency rooms.

And believe me -- they get around.

- ✓ BGU medical students help man a mobile unit that makes dialysis treatment available on a regular basis to distant kibbutzim and Bedouin tents.
- ✓ Students participate in special cardiac preventative programs for children all over the Negev who are at risk because one or both of their parents have heart disease.
- ✓ Others are involved in a major study of hundreds of immigrants from the former Soviet Union who were irradiated at Chernobyl. This is the only thorough investigation of this radiation-exposed population outside the former USSR.

The philosophy of BGU is to treat the whole person -- to be aware of not only a patient's medical problems, but also his or her psychological, social and cultural background.

All of this sounds good, but the real question is: Do these methods work?

You bet -- medical education at BGU is so good -- so famously good -- that U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton recently congratulated BGU for having established "a new standard for community health care and integrated medical training throughout the world."