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Vet students sharpen awareness of public health issues, careers through CDC trip, new joint DVM/MPH program

A group of 14 students and two faculty members from the UF College of Veterinary Medicine spent a day in Atlanta recently learning about public health and public service as participants in “CDC Vet Student Day.”

Organized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the event was held at CDC headquarters and was aimed at educating veterinary students from all over the country and Canada about the CDC’s mission, and introducing them to the fields of public health and epidemiology.

Three hundred students and nearly 60 faculty members attended the event.

“Unprecedented social and ecological changes associated with human demographics, environmental alterations and globalization have converged to create a modern era of newly identified and re-emerging infectious diseases,” wrote a member of the event’s organizing committee in a letter of invitation. “The majority of emerging pathogens, as well as most of those identified as bioterrorism agents, are either vectorborne or zoonotic microbes that have been transmitted from animals to humans.”

The organizing committee consisted of public health veterinarians committed to increasing the veterinary public health workforce and reaching out to veterinary colleges.

On the agenda were several veterinarians who spoke about their roles in public health and how students can get involved at CDC.

“The trip offered a great chance to ask people in the field what it’s really like and why they made the career choices they did. Internship opportunities were also presented, so we can start planning ahead. They have several amazing international opportunities for students.”

*Carrie Lawson, class of 2011
 DVM/MPH program student*

Dr. Paul Gibbs, a professor of infectious diseases, and Dr. Traci Krueger, who recently joined the faculty at the College of Public Health and Health Professions, led the UF group.

“This event is just one more example of activities here at the college which are focused on ‘One Health, One World’” Gibbs said, using the term for the concept which unites human and veterinary medicine with the goal of protecting animal and public health worldwide.

Another way UF has stepped up to the plate to encourage veterinary students to pursue careers in public health and epidemiology is the joint DVM/MPH program.

Currently there are 10 students enrolled in the program, which officially began last summer. Envisioned by former veterinary college dean Joseph DiPietro and former PHHP dean Robert Frank, the program has been implemented with considerable input from Gibbs, Krueger and veterinary doctoral student Tara Anderson, the veterinary college’s Office for Students and Instruction and Dr. Mary Peoples-Sheps, the PHHP college’s associate dean for public health development and practice.

“Without her support and vision for the program, it would not have been possible,” Krueger said.

A clinical assistant professor with the department of epidemiology and biostatistics’ environmental health program, Krueger was hired with the goal of furthering the development of the DVM/MPH program and bridging the gap between the two colleges.

“As one of only two graduates of both programs at UF, I am familiar with both,” Krueger said. “This puts me in a unique position to coordinate the logistics of fulfilling the requirements of both degrees within a four-year period, advising the students and developing courses that are pertinent to a career in veterinary public health — courses which are not currently being exclusively or thoroughly addressed in either program.”

She added that the MPH program was reorganized a few years ago due to the College of Public Health and Health Professions’ desire to become accredited. While a few graduates of the MPH program either had previously been or became DVMs, only Krueger and Tara Anderson have been through both programs since the program’s reorganization.

See CDC TRIP, p.4



Pictured at the CDC from left to right are Gabriel Davila, Shannon Roff, Cassie Carroll, Laura Norden, Holly Gans, Jessica Mack, Carrie Lawson, Meredith Swart, Van Brass II, Laura Jonovich, Jill Gregorieff, Dr. Traci Krueger, Maria von Chamier and Romna Hennig. Photo by Dr. Paul Gibbs

Gearing up for water rescue



During a two-day event offering equine rescue training to area police, firefighters and veterinary volunteers, CVM’s David John, Dr. Chris Bailey and Kathy Pennenga learned how to perform an equine water rescue at Lake Wauberg. Here they are shown with Ariel, the horse, who is strapped into a flotation device made from an inflated fire hose. The event featured instruction in many aspects of equine rescue and was coordinated through the CVM’s disaster relief program under the umbrella of the state’s Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Photo by Dr. Amanda House

Architect's rendering of new small animal hospital



Plans for the college's new small animal hospital continue to unfold. Since the last "town hall" meetings, held in November, the architectural design team has continued to meet regularly with all of the key user groups.

The meetings "have gone well," said Bob Hockman, associate director of medical/health administration for the college. More town hall meetings are planned for the first week in March, he added. Hockman said additional meetings had been held with UF's land, vegetation and lakes committee to ensure proper environmental care will be taken during construction, and another meeting is planned in March before UF's land use committee.

Around July, construction will begin on a new parking lot planned for the area known as the horse pasture, just east of the Veterinary Academic Building.

"We're still moving along and pretty pleased with the way things are going," Hockman said.

James A. Himes Scholarship reaches threshold for state match

Thanks to several last-minute gifts from UF College of Veterinary Medicine alumni, the James A. Himes Alumni Scholarship fund has surpassed the \$100,000 threshold amount needed to become eligible for state matching funds.

Dean Glen Hoffsis made the announcement Jan. 20 at the North American Veterinary Conference during the CVM alumni reception, drawing huge applause from the packed crowd. The college will now request \$50,000 in matching funds, which, if obtained, would allow the scholarship to provide approximately \$6,000 per year — \$1,000 each — indefinitely to six senior veterinary students in need of financial aid.

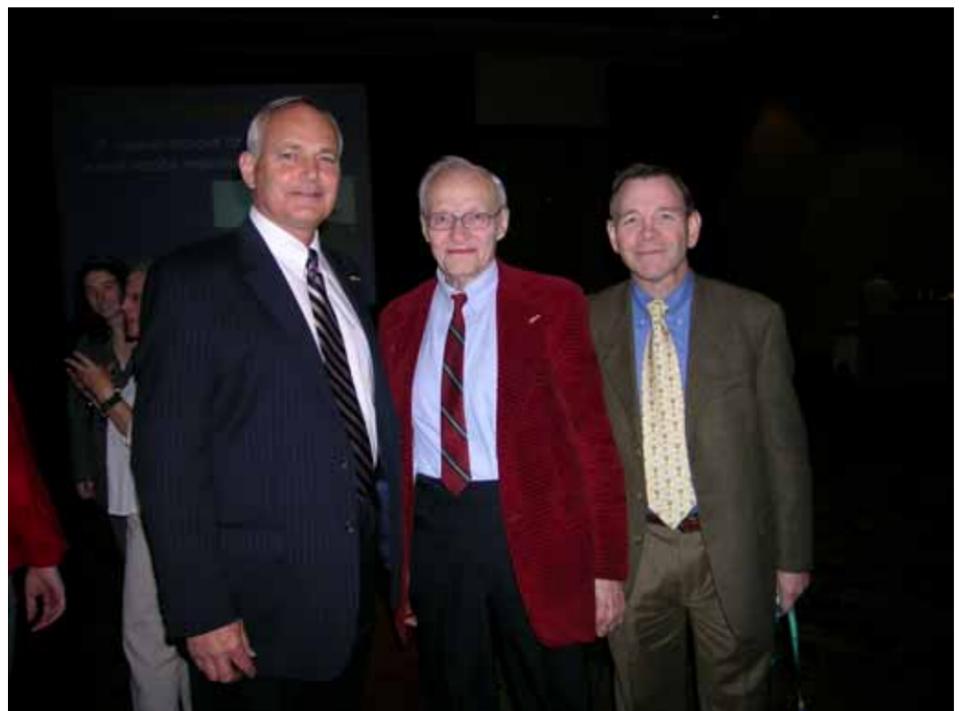
A total of \$108,625 was raised for the fund. Created in 1998, the Himes Scholarship was named in honor of the college's associate dean emeritus for students and instruction. Himes' service to UF began more than 40 years ago and continues today.

"For 15 of those years, Dr. Himes served as associate dean for students and instruction," said Link Welborn, D.V.M., '82, who helped conceive of and develop the scholarship when it was first formed and who has been instrumental in keeping alumni involved in the fundraising effort.

"His unselfish and caring nature has touched the lives of thousands of students, families and colleagues. This \$1,000 scholarship is awarded to a veterinary student with financial need and who has demonstrated what we call 'the Himes attitude.'"

As professor and associate dean emeritus, Himes continues to go to his office at the college almost every weekday.

"He remains dedicated to helping veterinary and pre-veterinary students in every way that he can," Welborn said.



Dean Glen Hoffsis, left, is pictured with Dr. Jim Himes and Dr. Link Welborn, '82, during the 2008 NAVC alumni reception following the announcement that the Himes Scholarship Fund had reached the \$100,000 threshold to be eligible for state matching funds.

Photo by Sarah Carey

Vet Med Gator Nation gathers for alumni reception at 2008 NAVC



Student Ambassadors crowd around the Tim Tebow Commemorative Heisman Trophy poster at the college's alumni reception during NAVC. From left to right are Sarah Balaguer, '08; Angela Avok, '10, Ashley Baker, '10 (kneeling), Lucie Allcutt, '10, and Lisa Harrington, '10.

Photo by Sarah Carey



From left to right are Dr. Esther Devlin, Dr. Megan Westfall, Dr. Katie Maldonado and Dr. Brenda Weissman-Benn, all from the class of '06.

Photo by Sarah Carey



Dr. Stacey Huber, '02, visits with Dr. Kim Shemmer, '86, for whom she worked prior to vet school.

Photo by Sarah Carey



Dr. Dale Kaplan-Stein, '81, pictured at center with daughter Sara Kaplan-Stein, a freshman veterinary student, and former classmate Dr. Scott Harris, '81.

Photo by Sarah Carey



Dr. Mike Harbin, '83, Dr. Jim Himes and Dr. Calvin LeClear, '97.

Photo by Sarah Carey



Lynn Varner, left, and Melissa Headrick, right, the small animal hospital's referring veterinarian liaisons, are pictured with Dr. Chris Steers, Dr. Bob Moja and Dr. Clay Jones, all from the class of '88.

Photo by Sarah Carey

Office of International Programs aims to educate students about global health issues through seminar series

The UF CVM Office of International Programs will be presenting its seventh annual seminar series in international veterinary medicine in the spring of 2008. This is an elective course open to all UF veterinary students.

"The course's objectives are to expose students to global health issues and to facilitate international educational or research opportunities for students," said Dr. Jorge Hernandez, course coordinator and professor of epidemiology in the department of large animal clinical sciences.

The seminars are scheduled on Wednesdays from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. in Lecture Halls A or B.

The seminar's 2008 program includes six international speakers from Australia, Chile, Mexico, Uganda and the United States. Dr. Sam Gibbs from the Australian Animal Health Laboratory will give two seminar presentations, one on the epidemic of avian influenza in Indonesia and another on the recent outbreak of equine influenza in racehorses in Australia.

Other prestigious speakers include Dr. Claudio Verdugo, University Austral of Chile, who will give a presentation on conservation and wildlife issues in Chile; Dr. Aline Schunemann from the National University of Mexico, who will give two presentations, one on cisticercosis in pigs and people of Mexico and another on welfare issues in working equids in Mexico; Dr. Abel Ekiri from UF, who will give a presentation on the role of veterinarians in the fight against poverty in Uganda; Dr. Andrea Mikolon from the California Department of Agriculture, who will present a talk relating to public health issues that affect people in Mexico, Mongolia and Peru; and finally, UF's Dr. Darryl Heard, who will present a seminar about his study abroad program on conservation and wildlife in Honduras.

The program includes a block of four back-to-back presentations on international educational and research opportunities offered at Colorado State University, University of Georgia, University of California at Davis, and Virginia Tech & Maryland University. These four presentations will be webcasted to UF using polycom technology (internet-based, real-time video conference).

The program includes a block of two back-to-back presentations on UF community health outreach programs in Yucatan, Mexico.

"These presentations will address important public health issues that affect the people of Yucatan," Hernandez said.

Drs. Judy Simms and Rhondda Waddell from the College of Medicine and Drs. Natalie Isaza, Sheilah Robertson and Jorge Hernandez from the College of Veterinary Medicine are exploring ways to formulate and implement an interdisciplinary approach for delivery of community health outreach programs in rural communities – in collaboration with the University of Yucatan and Mexico's Department of Health. These two presentations will be webcasted from UF to the University of Yucatan and will allow health science students from both universities to interact in this internet-based forum.

Last but not least, veterinary students Stephanie King and Michelle Bellville are scheduled to present results of their veterinary work they conducted in Yucatan, Mexico (lameness in carriage horses) and Uganda (veterinary care in cows and goats).

The deadline to sign up for the course for credit was Jan. 9, but for any additional information, please contact Hernandez via email at hernandezj@vetmed.ufl.edu.

CDC TRIP, FROM P.1

Carrie Lawson, a freshman veterinary student, is currently enrolled in the program. She also attended the CDC trip, which she said allowed her to meet students from other universities with similar interests, as well as professors and CDC employees.

"The trip offered a great chance to ask people in the field what it's really like and why they made the career choices they did," Lawson said. "Internship opportunities were also presented, so we can start planning ahead. They have several amazing international opportunities for students."

Lawson began the DVM/MPH program because she is interested in international work and possibly disaster relief.

"I think the recent global disasters such as Katrina and the Indonesian tsunami showed us the need for trained disaster relief veterinarians," she said. "UF has done a wonderful job of providing the DVM/MPH students with a good idea of the scope of career opportunities for public health veterinarians."

Anderson, who graduated from UF's veterinary college in 2003, decided after a stint in private practice to pursue helping animals and people in another way — through infectious disease research and public health. She received her master's degree in public health from UF in August while simultaneously working on her Ph.D. in infectious diseases from the College of Veterinary Medicine, a degree she expects to receive in 2009.

The five core disciplines of public health include biostatistics, environmental health, epidemiology, health management and policy and social and behavioral sciences. At UF, a sixth concentration called public health practice has been created, allowing the joint DVM/MPH students to combine coursework from two to four of the five core disciplines, thus adding flexibility and breadth to their studies.

"As veterinarians, we tend to think of public health as just zoonotic diseases, as that has been our traditional focus — zoonotic diseases and food safety," Anderson said. "But there are many areas of public health to which veterinary medicine can contribute. Our training gives us the skills to address a lot of issues."

Jill Gregorieff, a senior veterinary student, said she enjoyed the trip for many reasons.

"I think finding mentors, or just people who have already successfully navigated a path you want to take, is the first step to a successful career plan," she said. "I also think I would like to work at the CDC one day, so I took this chance to think about quality of life issues. I looked at things like work environment, traffic, housing prices, and community atmosphere."

"All in all, the trip was very useful to me and I look forward to starting a new career in an exciting and important field," Gregorieff said.

Students in the DVM/MPH program have formed a Public Health and Service Club which will provide additional learning and outreach opportunities for participants.

"I would like to see the club open opportunities for students not only in disaster relief training and within government agencies such as the CDC, APHIS, the Department of Homeland Security and within state and local government, but also for exposure to other 'up and coming' topics in the expanding field for veterinarians in public health," said Shannon Roff, club secretary.

"Most recently, our club has been working with John Haven to explore opportunities available to support disaster relief efforts. If we can get the word out to others that there are a variety of opportunities out there, and in the process give students the chance to get involved, perhaps we can give students more options and the ability to better serve themselves and their communities," Roff said.

Funding for the CDC trip was made possible in part by IDEXX, which provided \$1,000, and by the veterinary college's longtime supporters and volunteers — Pat Neilson, Cheryl Rowe and Joan Drost — who work regularly at the Shands at UF Gift Stop to raise money for veterinary college causes.

Student keeps open mind about opportunities afforded through DVM/MPH program

Shannon Roff, a freshman veterinary student and one of 10 enrolled in the joint DVM/MPH program, is pragmatic when it comes to planning her future: her decisions are practical as well as intuitive.

After 11 years working in the pharmaceutical industry, most recently for MedImmune, Inc., Roff — who holds a master's degree in microbiology — decided to further her education in a field that would provide the most opportunities to move forward in her career.

"For me, that was veterinary medicine," she said. "Honestly, at the time I applied, I hadn't really considered a career in public health."

But when she began interviewing at different veterinary schools, one interviewer asked if she had ever considered pursuing that aspect of the profession.

"When I told him I hadn't, he looked me in the eye and said, 'with your background and credentials, I strongly urge you to consider a career in public health.'"

At the time, she didn't think much about the comment, but "it popped up on my radar," Roff said.

"When I was accepted to the UF CVM and received the information from Dr. Paul Gibbs about the joint program, I gave it a more serious look," she added.

Roff subsequently spoke at greater length with Gibbs and Dr. Tara Anderson, a CVM alumnus who recently received her MPH degree, about the practicality of participating in the program if her main focus was to become a small animal practitioner.

"My last name is Roff, as in ruff with an 'o', so I figure it's fate that I should become a dog vet," she said.

Gibbs's take was that even if Roff didn't end up working in the public health field, having a background in public health and pursuing an MPH would add to her education, her credentials and would make her a stronger and more informed practitioner.

"It doesn't hurt that I have an interest in infectious disease, and used a plant virus to manufacture rabies vaccine antigens while working on my first master's degree," she said.

As one of 14 CVM students accepted to participate in the Merck-Merial Summer Research Program, Roff looks forward to spending time working in Dr. Maureen Long's laboratory, looking at Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), in dairy cattle.

"Of all the opportunities I have had in the past years in the working world, the one big thing it has taught me is that you never can predict where life's opportunities will take you," Roff said. "If you have an open mind, it's amazing where you can end up."



Shannon Roff with her dogs, Hannah, Butters and Syd.