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**School of
Veterinary Medicine**
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Message from the Dean | January 2021

Bye Bye 2020

I suspect that none of us are upset that 2020 is now behind us. It has been an intensely challenging year, not only due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also because of the issues faced around social justice and politics. With two approved COVID-19 vaccines, I am hopeful that all of us who wish to be vaccinated will be able to do so by mid to late spring of this year. Although this coming semester will look very similar to our fall semester of 2020, I suspect that by fall 2021 we will begin to return to some form of normalcy.



I am excited to present [the school's new Strategic Plan](#). We have spent the last year reviewing the school's mission and vision, as well as our strategic priorities. Throughout the spring, summer and fall, we listened to our many stakeholders. Over the next six months, I will present our strategic plan and priorities for the coming five years.

As you will note in our vision statement, we critically focus on the following: "Throughout all decision-making and day-to-day activities, the school values the importance of diversity in all of its manifestations." As you have heard from Richard Barajas, the school's Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Committee is creating its own strategic plan to better position the school to enhance the diversity of all who work and learn here, as well as the school's equity and inclusivity.

The school's plan articulates [five strategic priorities](#):

1. Leading educational excellence
2. Cutting-edge research and scholarship
3. Delivering outstanding animal care
4. Thriving organization
5. Vibrant community for all

In each of the next five months, my dean's message will focus on one of these priorities, including the goals and initiatives we will undertake to strive to achieve them. As always, please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions regarding our plan.

The strategic plan is the beginning of a year-long process and self-study for our upcoming AVMA Council on Education re-accreditation. We will begin crafting the self-study this spring, with the goal of completing it by the end of the year. Although not yet scheduled, we expect our site visit to occur in the late winter to spring of 2022. More information will be forthcoming as we have it.

I hope all of you had wonderful holidays. I look forward to 2021 to help move us on a path of healing, both physically and emotionally.

UW Veterinary Care Updates from the Director



Welcome to new UW Veterinary Care employees **Michelle Albino**, a clerical assistant with medical records and the call center, and **Kristina Weisberger**, a greeter/cashier in reception. Also, congratulations to **Sarah Harnden** and **Hayley Pooler**, who in December moved into new roles in the hospital as ER service coordinators.

Congratulations to **Samantha Loeber** and **Jane Lund** with the Diagnostic Imaging service for successfully completing American College of Veterinary Radiology (ACVR) certifying examinations. (Loeber passed her certifying exam for ACVR Equine Diagnostic Imaging and is now double-boarded.)

As we enter the New Year with new hope and possibilities, I share this feedback from a very grateful client whose goat was in great hands with our Morrie Waud Large Animal Hospital teams.

"My experience was awesome!! I felt like Merle was in the BEST human hands possible. I was updated at all necessary times throughout the process of Merle's stay. We adopted the 'no news is good news' policy right from day one. That was key for my health as well! I was so happy to see Merle healing at his pace in their care. I am forever grateful for letting me bring a friend (Lily) to stay with him. That simple gesture went above and beyond what I had expected. I know that it was a huge part of Merle's recovery. Thank you all so very much for your compassion and love for all animals and especially for Merle and his friends. Your dedication to helping animals is so evident in the work that you do. I will keep you all in my prayers for much abundant rest when needed for your future patients! THANK YOU!! I am eternally grateful for this experience."

-Rebecca, De Pere, Wisconsin

Ruthanne Chun DVM'91
Director, [UW Veterinary Care](#)
Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs

School News

On Call: The winter issue of *On Call* mailed to alumni and friends in December and is also [available online](#). In this issue we:

- Introduce to readers [Richard Barajas' role as director of diversity, equity and inclusion](#) and provide an update on school efforts to create a more diverse and inclusive culture.
- Spotlight the Shelter Medicine Program's [work to serve at-risk animals](#) and those who care for them each day.



- Express gratitude for the school's generous community of donors and [highlight some of the ways](#) this gracious support makes a difference.
- Announce the [inaugural alumni award winners](#) and more.

Building project: Last month the school's building project received authority to construct from both the UW Board of Regents and State Building Commission -- advancing through its last administrative step to move forward with construction in 2021. These votes mean the project can go out for bid in February, with construction work likely to begin in June or July (more specific timeline details will be shared when available).

COVID-19: The university has adopted new measures to enhance the safety of the campus community during the spring semester. These measures increase the scope and frequency of COVID-19 testing and link campus access to this testing through the Safer Badgers app. Visit [covidresponse.wisc.edu](https://www.wisc.edu/covidresponse) regularly for updates and [view a spring semester overview](#).

2020 reflections: The School of Veterinary Medicine was widely represented in 2020 reflections prepared by UW-Madison's Office of University Communications. Spot your colleagues and their work in the campus photographers' most memorable [Moments in Time](#) and research communicators' [most memorable stories](#).

Loss of a friend: Evelyn Fryer, a longtime member of the school's Board of Visitors, [passed away in November](#). Evelyn and her husband, **Frank**, had a long-standing relationship with the school from the time their company sold scientific equipment to the school to Evelyn's philanthropy, which included a naming gift in 2008 for the school's radiation therapy clinic.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion News

An update from Richard Barajas, director of diversity, equity and inclusion

Looking back on 2020, the school has taken a number of important steps to improve the climate around diversity, equity and inclusion. This work is never done and we must all continue to focus on these matters. While continued action is needed, I do want to celebrate some of the achievements we have made. In addition to the school creating the new position of Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, which I stepped into this past September, other recent initiatives include:

- For the first time in the school's history, we added questions related to our diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) climate in the biannual climate survey. This data will provide important information on where we stand and need to improve. It will also serve as a benchmark to ensure we are making the progress that we all want to see. We will provide a summary of this data to all SVM community members once it is collected.
- The Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Committee (EIDC), which includes faculty, staff and students, is currently working on a DEI Strategic Plan to guide the school over the short and long term. The VOICE Reformation Plan serves as a tool to inform this plan. Beginning next semester, the EIDC will host sessions for SVM faculty, staff and students to share draft planning documents for feedback and listen to our community's voices to ensure all are heard.
- In partnership with the PREPARE Graduates Task Force, Associate Dean Schmidt is examining ways to revise our DVM curriculum, including how to infuse DEI topics across all four years of the curriculum. We need to ensure that our faculty, staff and students have the necessary skills to work with individuals from all backgrounds and experiences and that all feel welcomed and included at the SVM.
- Recognizing the additional stress and barriers of navigating the educational accommodation process for students with disabilities, in fall 2019 Associate Dean Maki met with SVM and campus colleagues to reimagine the notification, implementation and support model for students accessing educational accommodations. The school implemented these practices in spring 2020 and further refined them during the 2020-21 academic year.
- As of July 1, all SVM faculty and staff must complete a DEI activity each year and document it in their annual review. This review includes a discussion with supervisors on



the impact of the activity. In this aim, the school has provided funds for any interested faculty, staff or student to complete the Purdue Certificate in Diversity and Inclusion in Veterinary Medicine, with 65 members of our community taking advantage of this opportunity. We will roll out this and other professional development opportunities over the coming months.

Faculty and Staff News

Welcome to **Jessica Hite**, joining the Department of Pathobiological Sciences as an assistant professor. Her research program will focus on mathematical modeling of infectious diseases.

Dean **Mark Markel** was elected as a Distinguished Fellow of the National Academies of Practice in Veterinary Medicine.

Student News

Melissa Sheth DVMx'21 is the 2021 [recipient of the Patricia M. Lowrie Diversity Leadership Scholarship](#) from the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges. The scholarship recognizes veterinary students who have demonstrated exemplary promise as future leaders and made significant contributions to enhancing diversity and inclusion in academic veterinary medicine. Sheth was honored for serving as clinic administrator for Wisconsin Companion Animal Resources, Education and Social Services (WisCARES), chapter president of Veterinarians for One Inclusive Community for Empowerment (VOICE), and instructor for a program that helps students, particularly students of color and those from lower-income families, to successfully transition from middle and high school into and through college.



Research News

Professors **Tracy Baker** and **Jyoti Watters** and Assistant Professor **Michael Cahill** in the Department of Comparative Biosciences received [Pandemic-Affected Research Continuation Initiative funding](#) from the UW-Madison Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education to support their work on chronic intermittent hypoxia in pregnancy.

New work published in *Scientific Reports* by scientist **Jenna Schmidt** in professor **Ted Golos'** lab provides a new macaque stem cell experimental platform in the continuum between the developing embryo and established pregnancy. Schmidt has derived trophoblast stem cells from rhesus and cynomolgus macaque placentas, utilizing a previously described protocol for human cells. The derived cells can be differentiated to two other types of placenta cells and, importantly, display phenotypes of early gestation.

Upcoming Events

SVM Virtual Faculty Appreciation Town Hall

Jan. 13

Noon

More details to follow. Zoom invitation will be sent by email on Jan. 11.

SVM Virtual Staff Appreciation Town Hall

Jan. 20

Noon

More details to follow. Zoom invitation will be sent by email on Jan. 18.

Note: UW-Madison continues to emphasize [established safety protocols and procedures](#).

SVM in the News

Get a COVID Vaccine, Toss the Mask? Not So Fast, Experts Say
The Cap Times

7 Things You May Not Have Known About Tetanus
EQUUS

Pet Care: Cancer Care, Treatment and Research
Wisconsin Public Radio

Research Inspired by COVID-19: UW Work on Genetic Sequencing Traces Community Spread
The Cap Times



For more media coverage of the SVM, visit the school's [In the News](#) page.

University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine
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