

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)



ALUMNI E-NEWS

July/August 2020



Update on DVM Class Composite Pictures

As was announced in the school's July 1 Message from the Dean, this summer the School of Veterinary Medicine will begin digitizing our class composite portraits and make them available on prominent digital displays in the first and second floors of the building. We will be removing the physical portraits from the school's hallways when the digital displays are up and running. Dean Mark Markel, in consultation with the school's leadership team, made this decision after listening to the stories and perspectives that Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) students, and other students, shared with us. We will work with our alumni, faculty, staff and students to determine how best to highlight the school's founding and history, and our alumni's contributions to our excellence. We are considering several suggestions and ideas for telling these stories in new and exciting ways, including highlighting the physical class portraits on our walls in a way that is also welcoming and inclusive of BIPOC students, faculty and staff. Some initial concepts include:

- Each year, for a year at a time, portray in a prominent location on the building walls the composite portraits of the five-year reunion classes being honored at that year's alumni reunion, as well as the most recent graduating class or classes.
- Honor and recognize the stories of our alumni (including BIPOC alumni), founding deans, and the history of the school and profession in a more robust, inclusive way

in the second-floor lobby of the current Veterinary Medicine building and areas of the new building.

- Invite alumni to tell the story of their careers through video biographies (one example of this is Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine, which has implemented a digital alumni composite display that includes video biographies).

We have heard from students and alumni of color about the bias and prejudices, whether intentional or unintentional, that they have experienced at the school. These students are being told in different ways that they somehow don't belong, and we are working to address those issues through an array of initiatives. But the lack of visible diversity in the class portraits reinforced for some students a suggestion that the school isn't a place where people of color are welcome and belong, and the portraits further amplify feelings of isolation. Displaying these images differently is a tangible step we can take to remove this suggestion. It is a small step forward in creating a more welcoming and inclusive environment, and it is important in our efforts to recruit a diverse student body to the profession of veterinary medicine.

We have heard from many current and former students of color, and from white students and alumni, about why this matters to current and prospective students (as well as faculty and staff) in contributing to an environment that welcomes and includes all. Educational research and best practices in recruiting a diverse student body and workforce reinforce this. We recognize that not all of our students or alumni will support this decision. However, this is a moral decision based on principle. We have heard students' pain and we must act on that. The school must be a successful and supportive work and learning environment for all, where all feel they belong. In that vein, we want to reiterate our commitment to respectful dialogue, whether it occurs online or in person, without any bullying, harassment or unprofessionalism.

We also recognize that for some this decision has led to feelings of hurt or misunderstanding. This was not the school's intent. We are focused on creating the best working and learning environment that we can at the SVM and we are looking at every way we can do that. This includes telling the story of the school's leaders and alumni in more robust, impactful -- and inclusive -- ways.

We are committed to honoring and celebrating our alumni, your accomplishments, and the school's history throughout the current Veterinary Medicine building and in the building expansion. We will continue to have dialogue and communication with all of our students, alumni, faculty and staff as we continue the important work of creating a learning and working environment where all feel they belong. If you would like to be involved in these conversations, please contact [Kristi Thorson](#).

Finally, some have suggested that rather than modify the display of class portraits in the interest of inclusion we should instead work to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in the student body. Please know that this is why we are modifying the class portraits and, importantly, it is just one of many initiatives. Diversity, equity and inclusion are steadfast commitments and priorities of the SVM and this includes ensuring academic success for a diverse student body. The school attends college fairs, conducts outreach to campuses, engages with high school counselors, participates in workshops and events for indigenous populations, takes part in national efforts to inspire future veterinarians, and so much more. And we have numerous efforts underway to recruit, select and retain a diverse workforce and enhance the inclusive climate at the school. (You can read about some of these efforts [here](#).) This September, the school will welcome our first diversity and inclusion manager, Richard Barajas. Under Richard's leadership, we will have even more updates and opportunities to share. The school has also established the [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Fund](#) to support the school's greatest needs in advancing a diverse, equitable and inclusive culture.

We hope that over the coming years the school will be known as one of the most inclusive and diverse schools on campus and serve as a leader nationally in these efforts. We also hope that all marginalized communities will feel a sense of belonging and inclusion in the profession of veterinary medicine, and specifically within the SVM family. We look forward to your continued partnership in these efforts.

School News

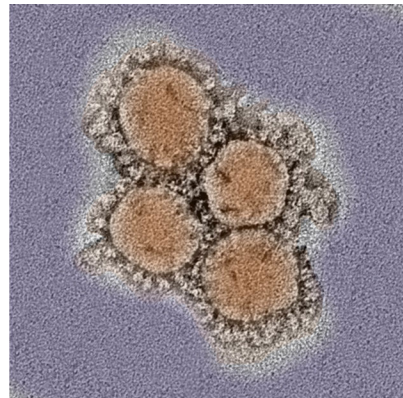
The latest updates on research, faculty and staff, and other happenings at the school.

In June, UW Veterinary Care Director **Ruthanne Chun DVM'91** hosted a virtual tour of the hospital as part of the Badger Talks statewide outreach program. [View a recording.](#)

Gillian McLellan has been named the inaugural recipient of the Tim and Nancy Speaker Chair in Canine Health. The Speaker Chair was established earlier this spring by **Tim and Nancy Speaker**, great friends of the school, who took advantage of the most recent Morgridge matching opportunity to support faculty recruitment and retention. This five-year appointment supports a faculty member whose research is focused on canine health and well-being.

Over the past year, the School of Veterinary Medicine has been awarded over \$28 million of research grant support, the highest award amount the school has ever achieved. This is 45 percent higher than the previous fiscal year. In recent research advances:

- In a [study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*](#) led by Professor **Yoshihiro Kawaoka**, scientists in the U.S. and Japan report that in the laboratory, cats can readily become infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and may be able to pass the virus to other cats.
- An additional [study led by Professor Kawaoka](#), published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, demonstrates that in Syrian hamsters -- an animal model for COVID-19 that shares important features of human disease -- prior infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus provides protection against reinfection, and treatment with convalescent serum limits virus replication in their lungs. The research team also obtained the first images of the internal features of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that aid its ability to replicate in host cells.
- Professor **Joan Jorgensen**, scientist and lead author **Anbarasi Kothandapani**, and others published findings in the journal *PLOS Genetics* that illuminate how genes and hormones interact [to develop male reproductive systems](#), a step toward researching why disorders in these organs have become more common and how we might prevent them.
- In work published in *PLOS Biology*, SVM scientists, including Professor **Mostafa Zamanian** and postdoctoral researcher **Nicolas Wheeler**, provide the [first look at the genetic underpinnings](#) of parasitic filarial nematodes' migration through their hosts. The parasitic worms infect hundreds of millions of people, causing diseases such as river blindness and lymphatic filariasis, which can lead to elephantiasis, a severe swelling of the limbs.



Continuing Education

Important update: Due to the financial impacts and long-term ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UW School of Veterinary Medicine has made the difficult decision to discontinue the continuing education program and has closed the department of veterinary medicine continuing education.

Expertise from throughout the school will still be available to the important audiences the school serves in Wisconsin and across the country and world. SVM faculty and staff will continue to partner with the Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association and other veterinary medical organizations to deliver continuing education to practitioners and the general public, in addition to the school's continued participation in events such as the Midwest Horse Fair, Wisconsin Dog Fair and World Dairy Expo.

Those who have previously registered for but not yet completed on-demand courses will be contacted individually and provided time to complete these courses. [Read more.](#)

Alumni Updates

The latest news about your classmates and items of special interest to alumni.

Sheryl Allen DVM'14 joined [Badger Veterinary Hospital in Beloit](#) in June. After graduation, Allen continued her education by completing a small animal internship at Purdue University. She has since been a small animal practitioner in south-central Wisconsin.

Megan Marcks DVM'20 has [joined Country View Animal Hospital](#) in Neenah. Her special interests include surgery, ultrasound and preventative medicine.

Danielle Schuld DVM'20 [joins Badger Veterinary Hospital in Janesville](#) as a small animal practitioner. Her veterinary interests include surgery, anesthesia, pain management and endocrine diseases.



Ongoing Clinical Trials

Trametinib in Dogs With Any Cancer
UW Veterinary Care is [investigating a novel drug](#), trametinib, that specifically "targets" a growth signaling pathway found in cancer cells from pet dogs to determine the optimal dose that is both safe and effective in shutting down the cancer's growth signals in dogs diagnosed with aggressive cancers. Additionally, the study will test whether a simple blood test can quickly determine whether effective drug levels are present in the dog. Finally, preliminary evidence of meaningful anticancer activity will be documented to determine if this novel drug should be studied in larger populations of dogs with cancer.

[Learn about other clinical trials .](#)

Upcoming Events

Event Cancellations

As was previously announced, the **SVM Alumni Reunion** originally scheduled for June 27 was canceled due to campus guidance around COVID-19. All campus events are canceled through at least August 17. We thank those who have shared feedback on potential alternatives; more information will be forthcoming.

Likewise, because the 2020 **AVMA Convention** (August 20-22) will take place virtually, the school's in-person alumni reception at the convention will not occur. We are exploring opportunities for potential virtual alumni gatherings and will be in touch.

[SVM Events Calendar](#)



STAY CONNECTED

