

Texas A&M University's new roads into one health

Ferguson et al¹ raise an excellent point in their recent letter to the editor calling for an expansion of the idea of one health. When the Texas A&M University One Health program was established, we saw a need to build on the definition of one health given in the report of the AVMA's One Health Initiative Task Force,² and defined one health as "the collaborative effort of multiple disciplines working locally, nationally, and globally to attain sustainable optimal health for the ecosystem. It is a cultural and behavioral concept with socioeconomic elements and impact."³ For this definition, the ecosystem is defined as the "biological community of living organisms (humans, animals, plants and microbes) and their physical environment interacting as a system."

To develop the one health vision at Texas A&M University, the College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences under the leadership of Dean Eleanor Green and the College of Medicine, then under the leadership of Dean T. Samuel Shomaker, created a university-wide one health program. Soon afterward, Texas A&M University identified one health as one of its grand challenges. To steer the one health initiative, a One Health Campus Council was formed with participation from all Texas A&M University schools and colleges; the council serves as an advisory body that promotes transdisciplinary one health research, education, and outreach programs.

In 2014, the university-wide one health program identified four major themes and invited faculty from across the university to form interdisciplinary collaborative teams and submit transformative research projects. Of 23 project proposal submissions, 4 were selected for funding by the Texas A&M University Vice President for Research.

The Texas A&M University One Health student programs include teams of individuals from diverse disciplines working in Nicaragua, participation in exchange programs between our institution and others (eg, the University of California-Davis and University of

Florida), an undergraduate learning community, and learning opportunities with one health professionals in governmental agencies in Washington, DC (eg, the FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine and USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture).

Texas A&M University students have established a Student One Health Association that is open to all Texas A&M University undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. The association includes individuals from multiple disciplines and applies one health concepts to societal issues.

Our programs in developing and developed countries continue to build strategic partnerships with international and regional organizations in one health research, education, and outreach. These programs foster skills such as cross-cultural competency, governance, economics, and sustainability.⁴

The Texas A&M University One Health program invites those who share a common vision, who are ready to attain sustainable optimal health for the ecosystem, and who want to create high-impact research, education, and outreach opportunities to please contact us.³

Rosina C. Krecek, PhD, MAP, MBA
Interim Assistant Dean of One Health
Office of the Dean
Visiting Professor, Department of
Veterinary Pathobiology
College of Veterinary Medicine and
Biomedical Sciences
Texas A&M University
College Station, Tex

Mike Chaddock, DVM
Associate Dean for Administration
College of Veterinary Medicine
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Mich

Merrideth Holub, MS
One Health Program Coordinator
Office of the Dean
College of Veterinary Medicine and
Biomedical Sciences
Texas A&M University
College Station, Tex

Ruth L. Bush, MD, JD, MPH
Vice Dean for Academic
Affairs and Vice Dean
Bryan/College Station Campus
Texas A&M Health Science Center
College of Medicine

Texas A&M University
College Station, Tex

Seth J. Sullivan, MD, MPH
Infectious Disease Consultant
Baylor Scott and White Health
Clinical Assistant Professor
of Medicine
Health Science Center
College of Medicine
Texas A&M University
College Station, Tex

Eleanor M. Green, DVM
The Carl B. King Dean
of Veterinary Medicine
Office of the Dean
College of Veterinary Medicine and
Biomedical Sciences
Texas A&M University
College Station, Tex

1. Ferguson J, Galligan D, Marshak R, et al. Expanding the idea of one health (lett). *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2015;246:403.
2. One health: a new professional imperative. One Health Initiative Task Force: Final Report July 15, 2008. Available at: www.avma.org/KB/Resources/Reports/Documents/onehealth_final.pdf. Accessed Feb 23, 2015.
3. Texas A&M University. One health. Available at: onehealth.tamu.edu. Accessed Feb 23, 2015.
4. Chaddock M. Academic veterinary medicine and one health education: it is more than clinical applications. *J Vet Med Educ* 2012;39:241-246.

Behavior difficult to reconcile with theories of rational economic decision making

I found the article "Estimating the financial return on a veterinary education"¹ to be very interesting. Given the complexity of human behavior, attempting to quantify the utility realized by obtaining a veterinary education is extremely challenging. Toward the end of the article, the authors pose several excellent questions, the answers to which might help explain why, given the low estimated return on investment for a veterinary degree, we have not seen a substantial decrease in the number of veterinary college applicants.

The authors rightly note that the utility of consuming a good or service (in this case, obtaining a veterinary education) comprises both tangible and intangible ben-