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 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 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 College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences.

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-