

STILLWATER, Okla.—A record number of students participated in Oklahoma State University's (OSU) Veterinary Research Scholars Program this summer thanks to competitive grants from the National Institutes of Health, the Merck-Merial Veterinary Scholars Program, the Morris Animal Foundation and OSU's Center for Veterinary Health Sciences.

The program has been offered in various forms for the past 14 years. It is open to veterinary students who have completed one or more years of veterinary college. Students must be available to participate for the entire 12-week summer program, which means usually first and second year students participate. This is the first time that spots were created for two advanced high school students from the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics in Oklahoma City. A total of 20 students participated.

Drs. Susan Little and Dianne McFarlane are Co-Directors of the program with Dr. Jerry Malayer, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education, providing program oversight. Little is a professor of Parasitology and holds the Krull-Ewing Endowed Chair in Veterinary Parasitology. McFarlane is an assistant professor in Physiological Sciences. Program Manager for 2008 is Ashley Nichols, class of 2010.



“The veterinary students are so excited, driven and eager to learn; it reminds you of yourself 20 years ago,” says Dr. Jerry Ritchey, associate professor of pathology and a program mentor. “From the research standpoint, it’s critical that the veterinary students see the world outside of private practice. Many students may not know that there are other career opportunities under the umbrella of veterinary medicine such as research, industry, and military/government service.”

At the end of the program, some students gain authorship or co-authorship on a research paper, and all of the students present their findings in poster form at the College Research Day and orally at Phi Zeta day in the spring. In addition, each student has the opportunity to attend a national meeting of similar programs from around North America. In 2008, Michigan State will host the national meeting, which is funded by Merck-Merial, NIH, and participating colleges of veterinary medicine. Funding to support student travel to the national meeting is entirely

covered through these sources.

“Several students from our program have also presented their research at national meetings, including the American Veterinary Medical Association, American Society for Microbiology, and specialty meetings like the American College of Veterinary Pathologists or the American Association of Veterinary Parasitologists,” adds Little.

“We at OSU are committed to providing outstanding professional development opportunities to all of our veterinary students,” Little smiles. “I can’t imagine us NOT running a program of this kind. The click moment that occurs when a student realizes that they are moving the field forward and not just repeating what others have taught them is a very rewarding phenomenon to witness.”

In the future Little sees the program evolving in exciting ways. This summer, OSU partnered with Kansas State University and the University of Missouri to do some shared field trips.

“I am very excited about this collaboration and I hope to be able to trade students with these institutions in the future, sending our students to Manhattan or Columbia to do their research and welcoming their students to Stillwater,” states Little. “By working together we can create an even stronger student research experience and help the students to see that they are not alone in their interest in biomedical research and that the opportunities are virtually limitless.”

Oklahoma State University is one of 28 veterinary colleges in the United States and is fully accredited by the Council on Education of the American Veterinary Medical Association. For more information, visit www.cvhs.okstate.edu or call (405) 744-7000.

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