Keeping in Contact During COVID

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many challenges, including staying in contact with friends and colleges when contact isn’t allowed.

Because of missing their 30th reunion, the Class of 1990 has started holding their own Zoom reunions with increasing frequency. They initially began meeting once a month and have increased to meeting every other week. The Zoom gatherings have been a no pressure way to keep in touch with classmates.

“It is great to catch up with all of our classmates. It is set up as a drop in format — come if you can, leave when you have to, no pressure. Come occasionally or come to them all,” says Kathy Reilly DVM'90.

In the beginning, the chats were a bit chaotic, but now everyone has two minutes to give an update on life events. In addition to catching up, they have added a book club. So far they have read Horses Don’t Lie by Chris Irwin and are currently reading Oxygen by Carol Cassella.

Members of the Class of 1990 encourage other classes to try a Zoom reunion, even if it’s not a reunion year for your class. If Zoom isn’t your thing, Google has a Hangouts feature or Facebook can also support video meetings. No matter the format you choose, staying in contact is a great thing.

If your class has done something fun, we would love to hear about it! Let us know what you’re up to by e-mailing the Alumni Advisory Board at uwsvmalumni@gmail.com.

PREPARE Graduates Task Force

The UW School of Veterinary Medicine’s 2021-25 Strategic Plan prioritizes “leading educational excellence.”

As part of this effort, the PREPARE Graduates Task Force (Program Revision to Enhance Professional Abilities, Relevance, and Excellence in our Graduates) has been formed and spearheaded by Peggy Schmidt, associate dean for professional programs. The task force includes members representing each SVM department, the Office of Academic Affairs, the school’s Curriculum Committee, alumni and student representatives.

Schmidt recently answered some of our questions about the task force and how it may affect alumni and current students.

SVM Alumni News: Leading Educational Excellence is a curriculum revision plan. What stimulated the need for a revision?

SCHMIDT: The veterinary profession continues to evolve with advances in science and technology. There are also advancements in pedagogy and cognitive science that are changing what we know about effective and efficient teaching and learning. A professional curriculum needs to be adaptive and responsive to these changes to ensure our students thrive during their education and our graduates are prepared for success in the profession.

Faculty, staff and students are participating in workshops to incorporate evidence-based best practices into the curriculum. What types of practices are these?

During the discovery phase, the task force searched the literature for evidence of current best practices in health professions education. Conversation with other veterinary programs who revised curricula in recent years helped identify what
Suicide in the Veterinary Profession

We are all saddened to learn of Dr. Josh Smith’s recent death by suicide. A talented criticalist, Smith joined UW Veterinary Care’s Emergency and Critical Care team in fall 2020.

Suicide, when it does occur, is a very complicated act. There is no simple or single cause or answer. It is usually the culmination of several health and life factors that converge in a person’s life during the same period of time, including mental health conditions such as depression, which lead to overwhelming mental and/or physical pain, anguish and hopelessness. Sometimes these risk factors and warning signs are not identified or noticed; other times, a person who is struggling will show more obvious symptoms or signs.

It is important that we as a profession understand how we can help. There are treatments to help people with mental health struggles who are at risk for suicide or having suicidal thoughts.

Along with risk factors, there are known protective factors that mitigate risk for suicide. Mental health concerns are not something to be ashamed of — they are a type of health issue like any other kind, and there are effective treatments to help manage them and alleviate the distress.

Reaching out to people is key. Checking in with friends, colleagues, staff or coworkers can make the world of difference. It is very difficult for an individual to reach out for help when they are feeling isolated and depressed. If your gut instinct tells you something is different about a friend or colleague’s behavior, engage in a conversation with them. Listen without interrupting, judgment or shaming. Don’t think you need to fix the person; just be there with kindness and compassion. If you are concerned, encourage them to seek help. The following are just some of the resources available.

Online resources
- avma.org/wellbeing – AVMA wellbeing resources, including a free QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) suicide prevention training program. The training takes about 30 minutes.
- sprc.org – Suicide Prevention Resource Center
- NAMI.org – National Alliance on Mental Illness
- NIMH.NIH.GOV – National Institute of Mental Health
- nomv.org – Not One More Vet (NOMV) website and Facebook page for veterinary professionals only

Helplines to assist suicidal persons and their loved ones
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text TALK 741741
- National Hope Line Network 1-800-442-HOPE (4673)
- Samaritan’s Hotline 1-877-382-4673

Please reach out for help and encourage colleagues to do the same. Help-seeking is a sign of strength.

new graduates appear differently to alumni interested in hiring?

As part of the revision process, we want to be sure our curriculum aligns with the new Competency-Based Veterinary Education (CBVE) Framework from the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges. The move toward competence or outcomes-based education can be seen as a shift from focusing on input (time in training or rotations completed) to output (attained competence or workplace performance). This framework provides better transparency in what graduates are expected to be able to do as entry-level veterinarians and guide the curricular content to ensure achievement by graduates.
Organized Veterinary Medicine Leadership

Ann Sherwood Zieser DVM’90

Helping to protect our licenses, using legislation to make things better for the animals and people of Wisconsin and the U.S., and opening the eyes of fellow practitioners are just some of the products of organized veterinary medicine.

Meet Ann Sherwood Zieser, past president of the Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association (WVMA) and UW School of Veterinary Medicine alumna from the Class of 1990.

Ann’s interest in leadership and organized veterinary medicine started in veterinary school. She was the vice president of the Student Chapter of the American Veterinary Medical Association (then SCAVMA, now SAVMA).

After graduation, she worked for a practice where her boss was very devoted to organized medicine. He paid the dues for local, state, and national organizations.

With the support of her practice, Ann soon became involved in the Dane County Veterinary Medical Association (DCVMA). She served in several leadership roles within the DCVMA, starting as the organization’s secretary and then treasurer, vice president and finally president.

Ann’s roles in the DCVMA led to her involvement in the Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association (WVMA). During a WVMA convention, Ann met René Carlson, who was very enthusiastic and encouraging. As one of Ann’s mentors, René emphasized that newer graduates were the future of organized veterinary medicine.

While serving as the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) alternate delegate for Wisconsin, Ann met many people in leadership positions. She was also able to reconnect with René Carlson, who would soon be the president of the AVMA. René was again very encouraging of Ann to continue in her leadership positions in organized veterinary groups.

“When people in leadership believe in you and express interest in your opinion, this encourages you to want to get involved,” Ann says.

And she did get involved. Ann represented Wisconsin to the AVMA as the alternate delegate and then the delegate. In total, Ann was in the House of Delegates for eight years and had the opportunity to meet many other veterinarians from all over the United States and Puerto Rico.

“It was fulfilling to get to meet so many amazing people,” she says.

During her service, Ann formed friendships with fellow veterinarians from as far away as Alaska and Massachusetts. This different facet of veterinary medicine, helped to keep her enthusiastic and engaged.

In addition to her work with the AVMA, Ann has also dedicated her time to Wisconsin. Ann served on the WVMA Convention Committee and later became the group’s chair. After her AVMA service was complete, Ann was asked to get more involved with the WVMA. Ann served as president-elect, president and now is immediate past president. Ann played a key role in searching for and hiring a new executive director of the WVMA during the pandemic — very challenging, as we all can imagine.

Overall, Ann has really enjoyed all her experiences in organized veterinary medicine. She would encourage others to join her in enthusiasm for getting veterinarians together to look at veterinary medicine from another perspective.

Alumni Awards Update

The SVM Alumni Advisory Board was hoping that we would be able to present our 2021 Alumni Awards in conjunction with the Investiture Ceremony for the Class of 2021. However, due to campus event guidelines, that ceremony was again held virtually this year.

In hopes of being able to hold an in-person presentation to recognize our award recipients, we have postponed the announcement of this year’s honorees and extended the deadlines for nomination and awards. We will be looking to fall 2021 to present the awards.

Please visit the SVM website to submit award nominations: vetmed.wisc.edu/svm-alumni-awards. We will announce new dates as soon as we have more information.
ALUMNI INPUT NEEDED!
BRONZE SCULPTURE PROJECT

John Hallett DVM ’90 is developing a bronze sculpture that will be displayed in the courtyard between the current Veterinary Medicine Building and the expansion across Linden Drive. The multi-layered sculpture will highlight elements of the DVM experience and Dr. Hallett is seeking ideas from fellow alumni regarding imagery, animal species and other features of the display.

LEARN MORE & GET INVOLVED
Contact Kristi Thorson
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