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# *lifelines*

News from the  
College of Veterinary Medicine  
at Kansas State University

April 2015

Vol. 10 No. 4

## Vectoring in on a new research center

### Center of Excellence for Vector-Borne Diseases launches with \$250,000 gift from Abaxis

The College of Veterinary Medicine at Kansas State University is announcing the establishment of a new center of excellence that will focus on helping to control infectious diseases in both humans and animals. The Center of Excellence for Vector-Borne Diseases (CEVBD) was publicly launched April 8 under the guidance of Dr. Roman Ganta, professor of diagnostic medicine and pathobiology. The center also received a \$250,000 gift from Abaxis, whose representative, Dr. Dennis Bleile, senior director, R&D, attended the ceremony and presented a check.

The CEVBD is an interdisciplinary research center with a mission to combat vector-borne diseases with a focus on pathogenesis, surveillance and disease prevention.

“The CEVBD will prepare us well to build a nationally and internationally recognized program to combat the emerging threats of vector-borne diseases in the USA, including bacterial, parasitic and viral diseases,” Dr. Ganta said. “The center will also strive to synergize with the soon-to-be-established federal facility in Manhattan, the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF). The research that we will conduct will serve a role in helping to advance the goals of the K-State 2025 mission to become a top 50 public research university.”

Goals of the center also include establishing a tick-rearing facility to support the research needs of Kansas State University and other academic institutions and industry in the U.S.

“We at Abaxis are honored to be able to provide support for the new Center of Excellence for Vector-Borne Diseases,” said Dr. Dennis Bleile, senior director, R&D at Abaxis. “We have followed the excellent work of Dr. Ganta and his group in their pursuit of understanding vector-borne diseases — including



Dr. Roman Ganta, director of the new Center of Excellence for Vector-Borne Diseases, accepts a generous \$250,000 check from Dr. Dennis Bleile, senior director of research and development, at Abaxis.

the pathogens’ evasion mechanisms and hosts’ response to these infections. His group brings together molecular biology, immunology, animal models, and cell culture systems to pursue its goals.”

“We are deeply appreciative of Abaxis for helping support the center,” said Dr. Roman Ganta, professor of diagnostic medicine and pathobiology and director of the center. “This gift will in part allow us to promote the advancement of knowledge on vector-borne diseases of importance to companion and agricultural animals and humans, including the diseases caused by Ehrlichia, Anaplasma, Rickettsia and Borrelia species”

The center will also develop programs to prepare future generations of scientists with expertise on vector-borne diseases, offering continuing education workshops, and in developing

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#### Inside this issue of *lifelines*

##### KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Grace Chen  
Christian Eckert  
Pamela Etchegoyen  
Bruce Figger  
Colleen Geertsema  
Diane Larson

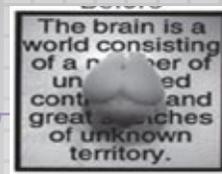
**Zoetis lists new scholarships.**

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**Who was K-State's rep at the Fly-in?**

**See page 3**



**Learn how Dr. Anji gained CLARITY.**

**See page 4**

## Group of 20 students receive scholarship from Zoetis and AAVMC

A group of 20 students has been named as recipients of the 2015 Zoetis (z -EH-tis) Veterinary Student Scholarship. The scholarship program is sponsored by Zoetis a global animal health company, in partnership with the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC).

The scholarship represents an ongoing commitment by Zoetis to invest in the future of the veterinary profession. The program awarded nearly \$1 million in scholarships this year — \$2,000 each to 487 second- and third-year veterinary students at accredited universities throughout the United States and the Caribbean. Nearly 1,200 students applied for the scholarships, which for many recipients will help reduce post-graduation loan debt averaging more than \$160,000.

“With the continuing rising cost of veterinary education and concerns regarding repayment of educational debt following graduation, we are extremely pleased with the commitment of Zoetis to partner with our profession to provide significant scholarship funds to help our students financially,” said Dr. Ronnie Elmore, associate dean for academic programs, admissions and diversity. “The investment made in our students now will pay big dividends far into the future.”

“I am very grateful to Zoetis for assisting me with the cost of my veterinary

education,” said third-year student Lauren Sawyer, Fort Collins, Colorado. “Understandably, the burden of student debt is one that weighs heavily on my mind. The generous scholarship from Zoetis will help to alleviate some of that stress and allow me to more fully devote myself to my education. After graduation, I hope to work in the field of public health or epidemiology to prevent major animal disease outbreaks in the United States. Thanks again to Zoetis for helping me on my way to these goals.”

The awards were based on the traditional criteria of academic excellence, leadership, and financial need, as well as meeting the ongoing needs of the veterinary profession: diversity, sustainability, and mixed/rural medicine practice. The program was launched to address the issue of student debt and its impact on the future of the veterinary profession, with a focus on food animal medicine.

Along with Sawyer, the following Kansas State University veterinary medicine students are Zoetis scholarship recipients:

Samantha Schimming, third year, Goddard; Bruce Figger, third year, Hudson; Sarah Nissley, second year, Manhattan; Diane Larson, third year, and Kelsey Sparrow, second year, both from Overland Park; Ellen Unruh, second year,



*A list of all national scholarship recipients greets participants at the annual SAVMA meeting in Washington, D.C.*

Rantoul; and Christian Eckert, second year, Sterling.

From out of state:

From California: Colleen Geertsema, third year, Carlsbad; Grace Chen, second year, Hacienda Heights; and Pamela Etchegoyen, third year, Redding.

From Colorado: Hannah Leventhal, third year, Arvada; Mikaela Veters, third year, Eaton; and Megan Spencer, third year, Fort Collins.

Malaina Lough, second year, Springfield, Massachusetts; Caitlin Timmins, third year, Lambertville, New Jersey; and Tonia Traas, third year, Waunakee, Wisconsin.

From out of country: Bo Liu, second year, China; So Lee Park, second year, Republic of Korea; and Vien O, second year, Vietnam.

## Ganta | Abaxis supports launch of new center

resources, such as a repository to maintain culture stocks of vector-borne pathogens.

“Abaxis has been a wonderful supporter of our college and programs,” said Dr. Ralph C. Richardson, dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine. “Through this gift in support of our college’s newest center of excellence, Abaxis has demonstrated a true commitment to veterinary medicine and the greater human and animal health professions.”

The center will develop a network to build research programs to promote strong collaborations among K-State faculty who have shared interests, as well as faculty and researchers at other academic institutions and industry in the U.S. and abroad.

“This facility is already in progress,” Dr. Ganta explained. “We started rearing *Amblyomma americanum* and *Ixodes scapularis* ticks. Further, we have developed a network to build research programs to promote strong collaborations among K-State faculty who have shared interests, as well as faculty and researchers at other academic institutions and industry in the U.S. and abroad.”



continued from page 1

## A 'flying' success; First-year student Hailey Clemons goes to Washington for legislative event

At the beginning of March, first-year student Hailey Clemons attended the 7th annual AVMA Legislative Fly-In in Washington, D.C. The workshop is designed to introduce veterinary students to the legislative process and to educate students and members of Congress on public policy issues facing the veterinary profession.

During the two-day event, staff from the AVMA's Governmental Relations Division provided briefings on current issues facing the veterinary medical profession on Capitol Hill. Attendees were encouraged to learn how lobbying works, the role advocates play in the federal government and the important role veterinarians can play in shaping public policy. About 100 students attended from different veterinary colleges. Hailey shared her thoughts about this year's event:

"The AVMA Student Legislative Fly-in gave me a whole new perspective on the importance of veterinarians' active role in governmental relations. Legislation has an effect on the profession as a whole, for both students and current veterinarians. Importance of active awareness is thus extended down to the student level instead of just veterinarians.

"As the Kansas State University student representative, I was able to meet with staff and the actual senators/representatives for our state and share concerns from my perspective as well as others that I had gathered from the college. Presenting facts on how the current Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) tax of 39 percent is a large hindrance was one

of my focuses. The VMLRP awards veterinarians who agree to practice in designated areas of veterinary shortage for a minimum of three years up to \$75,000 in educational loan repayment. It is currently awarded to 286 veterinarians nationwide with 860 applications and growing. The 39 percent tax currently on this award reduces the budget the equivalence of the amount for 100 more awards.

"Without award programs like this it may be an economic hardship for veterinarians to go and practice in areas of need and still be able to make loan payments on top of the cost of living, so they must choose to pursue other options simply to stay out of the red. There is currently an enhancement act in the senate to remove the 39 percent tax, and to our benefit, both of our senators are supportive. This would enable 100 more graduates every year the financial ability to practice in the setting they desire, as well as fill areas of veterinary need.

"Simply visiting with senators and representatives about the hardships that students and recent graduates face was rewarding. All were very receptive and interested as they understood the large role veterinarians play in Kansas agricultural economics.

While attending various sessions at the fly-in, I was also able to network with students from many other veterinary schools. Discussions often involved differences between programs as well as legislative issues on the state level.



**Top: Hailey Clemons arrives for the first day of the AVMA legislative "fly-in." Bottom: Hailey joins fourth-year student Michael White (on the AVMA externship) in meeting Kansas Senator Jerry Moran.**

"Although we (students) may be stuck with our nose in a book or against a computer screen most of the time, the importance of our awareness became very clear to me especially concerning things such as the VMLRP or interest rates on graduate school loans. I hope to use my insight from the fly-in experience to raise awareness of the importance of students' involvement in legislation and the large impact that it has on them as well as the profession as a whole. "

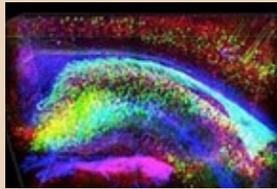
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## Dr. Antje Anji seeks CLARITY

Dr. Antje Anji attended a CLARITY workshop March 10-12 at Stanford University in California. CLARITY is a new technique developed in the Deisseroth Lab that makes the brain optically transparent while preserving the structural details. This allows for detailed microscopic investigation and improved brain imaging. Dr. Anji said she plans to use this technique in her studies.



A 3-D image via the CLARITY technique showing a mouse hippocampus.

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“Alcohol, one of the most abused drugs worldwide, presents a socio-economic burden on every society. In spite of this, effective treatments for alcohol addiction are not available. Our research emphasis is on a well-established target of alcohol in the brain, NMDA receptors consisting of NR1 and NR2B subunits,” said Dr. Anji, research associate professor in the Department of Anatomy and Physiology. Read more online: [www.vet.k-state.edu/development/lifelines/1504.html](http://www.vet.k-state.edu/development/lifelines/1504.html)

## CVM News Ticker

**Dr. Emily Reppert** passed the certifying examination and completed all requirements to attain Diplomate status with the ACVIM (Large Animal). **Drs. Marian Benitez, Dylan Lutter and Liz Taylor** passed the ACVS certification board examination.

**Drs. Butch and Kate KuKanich** received Morris Animal Foundation funding for first-year student **Tanner Slead** to participate in the Veterinary Research Scholars Program (VRSP). The VRSP is an intensive research-oriented experience directed towards attracting our most talented professional students into biomedical research careers.

**Erin Jobman**, second-year student, won a \$200 scholarship from the American Association of Swine Veterinarians in the Veterinary Student Poster Competition at the association's 46th Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida.



# SAVE the DATE

## 21st Annual Scholarship Golf Tournament

Monday, June 8, 2015 | Colbert Hills Golf Course  
Manhattan, Kansas

**7:30 a.m. - Registration | 8:30 a.m. - Shotgun Start**

### Purpose

All proceeds go to scholarship assistance for Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine students. The tournament has provided nearly \$85,000 in student support over the past 20 years.

### Fees

\$150 per person or \$600 per team. Fee includes carts and lunch. Prizes will be awarded for hole-in-one, longest drive, closest to the pin, longest putt and many others.

### Register

To register, please, contact the Alumni Affairs Office at 785-532-4528. Please register before May 29 to ensure a spot. **Limited Space Available.**

[www.vet.k-state.edu/development/events/golf/](http://www.vet.k-state.edu/development/events/golf/)