

WIMU website: <http://wimu.montana.edu/>

MSU's inaugural class of regional vet-med students graduate

MSU News Service

May 11, 2018

<http://www.montana.edu/news/17732/msu-s-inaugural-class-of-regional-vet-med-students-graduate>

BOZEMAN – Eleven Montana State University students hailing from all corners of Montana are newly minted veterinarians.

Comprising MSU's inaugural class of the Washington, Idaho, Montana and Utah Regional Program in Veterinary Medicine, dubbed WIMU, the students began their first year of the regional program in Bozeman, housed in the College of Agriculture. They then completed the final three years of their doctor of veterinary medicine degrees at Washington State University in Pullman. They received their diplomas on May 5.

Mark Quinn, MSU's WIMU program director and professor in MSU's Department of Microbiology and Immunology, said each of the students performed exceedingly well and that several plan to return to Montana right away to practice veterinary medicine. Several additional students eventually plan to return to the state to practice after completing additional training.

"Each student in this class had strong ties to Montana, and for many, their goal is to return to the state to practice," Quinn said. "It's not unusual for (doctor of veterinary medicine) students to immediately seek additional training and education after graduation for advanced experience. It's often recommended for those pursuing expertise in (medicine for) large animals."

The Montana Legislature and Gov. Steve Bullock approved MSU's participation in the WIMU program during the 2013 state legislature to bolster the state's veterinarian workforce, especially in the area of large-animal vets in underserved rural areas. The program was also a means to provide affordable access to Montana students wishing to pursue veterinary medical education.

In their first year at MSU, WIMU students learn basic animal anatomy, immunology, neurology, nutrition, physiology, surgery fundamentals and animal handling to master the structures and systems of a normal, healthy animal, Quinn said. They then transfer to WSU for three more years of additional training and completion of regional clinical rotations.

The small class size during the students' first year of training at MSU, usually 10 or 11 students, has advantages when it comes to hands-on coursework and training, Quinn said.

"The smaller class size has a lot of advantages, particularly when it comes to animal handling, hands-on training and faculty-student interaction," he said. "You can do a lot more with a class of 10 than you can with 90."

Quinn said WIMU students also travel around Gallatin County, and in summer months, students can seek work or internships in Montana veterinary practices. They can also return to Montana practices for clinical rotations, required in their final year at WSU. WIMU students also have access to horses and cattle owned by MSU.

Quinn said the small first-year class size also creates a tight-knit community among students.

"That was probably the most consistent feedback we received – that Montana students stuck close together for the duration of the program and that everyone felt their first year in WIMU at MSU set them up for success, both academically and in terms of a support network," he said.

The 2014 class of MSU's WIMU graduates are:

Cassidy Briggs from Grass Range.

Garrett Bronec from Denton.

Jared Hardaway from Belgrade.

Anne Hutton from Wisdom.

Katie Olson from Three Forks.

Brenee Peterson from Havre.

Jess Scherr from Great Falls.

Lane Schmitt from Chinook.

Kelsey Stoner from Clancy.

Katlyn Tomschin from Wilsall.

Thomas Wurtz from Dupuyer.

Briggs has accepted a one-year internship at Bend Equine Medical Center in Bend, Oregon. Following her internship, Briggs said she plans to return to Missoula for private practice.

Bronec is planning to work at a mixed-animal clinic at Indian Hammer Veterinary in Vaughn and said he appreciated WIMU's small class size and mentorship by faculty.

Hardaway has accepted a one-year equine surgery internship at San Luis Rey Equine Hospital at Oceanside, California. Hardaway said after his internship, he plans to return to Montana to work alongside his father at Hardaway Veterinary Hospital. Hardaway said his first year spent at MSU prepared him well for coursework at WSU.

"The WIMU experience has been wonderful, and I'm very excited to further my knowledge in equine sports medicine and surgery and to bring that knowledge back to the Gallatin Valley," Hardaway said.

Hutton said she plans to apply for an equine surgical residency after an internship at Pioneer Equine in Oakdale, California next year. Hutton said that spending her first year at MSU helped her transition to WSU.

Olson has accepted a position with Pruyn Veterinary in Missoula.

Peterson has accepted a position as a clinician in Havre at Bear Paw Veterinary Clinic. She said her first year spent at MSU provided with her hands-on skills required during her clinical rotations.

Scherr plans to train in a mixed-animal practice in South Fork Animal Clinic in Rigby, Idaho.

Schmitt has accepted a position with Chinook Veterinary Clinic in Chinook.

Stoner will complete a one-year equine internship at Equine Sport's Medicine and Surgery in Weatherford, Texas after graduation. Stoner said WIMU's hands-on laboratories advanced her knowledge and skills for veterinary practice in several fields.

Tomschin has accepted a position with The Stock Doc in Riverton, Wyoming.

Wurtz has accepted a position as an associate veterinarian at the Best Friends Animal Hospital in Great Falls. He said his favorite aspect of WIMU was the access onto farms and into veterinary clinics to develop technical skills.

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