



Surveys show 100 per cent of DVM graduates are employed within one year of graduation.

## Demand for veterinarian skill set remains high

THE DIVERSITY OF CAREERS available to OVC graduates ensures a variety of opportunities for graduates and alumni. While the profession continues to evolve and change, the demand for veterinarians' skill set remains consistently high.

OVC graduate and employer surveys one and five years out from the DVM program point to the high employability of a veterinary degree holder. Surveys consistently show 100 per cent employment within one year of graduation.

"Not only do the statistics we collect show a high demand for our graduates, the employer

feedback we receive underscores the quality of our graduates, with a high degree of satisfaction on proficiency and performance," says Dr. Kerry Lissemore, OVC's associate dean, academic. "The information we receive from these surveys also helps to inform and improve our curriculum."

Annual new graduate surveys by the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association (OVMA) reveal similar results. These surveys also offer a snapshot of where new grads land, with the majority entering clinical practice, such as companion

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**Dr. Grant Maxie**, director of U of G's Animal Health Laboratory, received the **Canadian Animal Health Coalition's 2016 Carl Block Award**. The peer-nominated annual award recognizes outstanding contributions in livestock animal

health. Maxie has been integrally involved in laboratory management and surveillance in Canada and internationally over his distinguished career and has provided leadership in several national diagnostic and surveillance initiatives.

## FROM THE DEAN

# Continual improvement prepares us for the future



**Student veterinarians examine a horse at OVC.**

I'VE HAD A LOT of conversations since I joined OVC – with students, practice owners and alumni. One year into my position as dean, I remain inspired and humbled by my new role in supporting and furthering our profession.

I have spent time carefully listening to every student and veterinarian I encounter. I have talked to many alumni and practice owners, and I have visited some stellar practices. I have also had a lot of interaction with veterinarians serving in the various professional organizations, and have become quite familiar with the issues that concern the

profession here in this province, nationally and internationally.

The feedback I've received indicates there is a very wide range of views on how our profession is doing in Ontario. There is no doubt this is a period of change and of real challenges for the veterinary profession. I see much evidence that the profession is adapting well, as it has always done during periods of change, to the new and changing realities of today's business environment.

As a college of veterinary medicine, we constantly look to the future to ensure that we are doing everything we

can today to predict and prepare for the inevitable changes in our profession.

The OVC has adopted a culture of continual improvement, as we seek to enhance our facilities, services to referring veterinarians, DVM curriculum, recruitment and admissions processes. It is the dedication of our faculty, staff, alumni and students that drives us to be the best we can be.

We continuously seek out and employ best practices from here in Canada and other countries to improve the learning experience and deliver practice-ready veterinarians. The student experience of today bears little resemblance to that of 10 years ago, let alone when many of us graduated.

These changes have resulted either directly or indirectly from the feedback we have received from employers and graduates. Our graduate and employer surveys are instrumental in gathering this information, and we encourage you to participate in these.

The graduates we've talked to for this issue of *The Crest* exemplify some of the diverse roles our graduates are pursuing today. Whether using our talents in clinical practice, research, teaching, or working in government or industry, we have the tools to tackle a wide spectrum of challenges and opportunities and to positively impact our society.

*Dean Jeffrey Wichtel*

**STROBE-Vet**, a new set of guidelines for observational studies in animals, will ensure clear writing and comprehensive reporting to better translate scientific results to decision-makers. **Dr. Jan Sargeant**, an epidemiologist and

director of U of G's Centre for Public Health and Zoonoses, co-chaired the initiative with **Dr. Annette O'Connor**, Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine, and an international group of 16 experts who developed

the guidelines. Sargeant is the lead author on an article outlining how the guidelines were developed, published simultaneously by five major veterinary journals in December 2016.

## COLLEGE NEWS

# OVC students well prepared for internships and residencies

OVC STUDENTS PURSUING ADVANCED clinical training find their alma mater's name helps open doors. Likewise OVC ranks highly among students applying for internships and residencies.

Dr. Stephanie Nykamp, associate dean, clinical programs, says internship and residency opportunities are important because "they allow DVM graduates to gain additional mentored experience or obtain specialized training in a specific field."

The majority of potential interns and residents apply through the American Association of Veterinary Clinicians' Veterinary Internship and Residency Matching Program, with each student ranking schools in order of their desirability, explains Elizabeth Lowenger, manager, Student Affairs. Schools review the applications and identify students they see as good fits, and the program makes the matches.

OVC students consistently place highly for internship and residency matches, says Lowenger, a reflection of the excellent education and mentoring they receive from faculty and alumni here.

OVC is a popular choice for applicants in part because the school offers advanced training in a number of areas, including pathology and diagnostic imaging. It's also one of the few institutions to offer a program for veterinarians interested in working with zoo animals in partnership with the Toronto Zoo.

Nykamp adds it's not always easy for students to get into the program they want because many are highly competitive. "The long hours and hard work can be a big challenge, but most would say it is worth it when they achieve their career goals."

## Veterinarian shares passion for wildlife with students

AN ORDINARY WORK DAY for Toronto Zoo veterinarian Pauline Delnatte might involve examining an exotic frog that is showing signs of illness, prescribing medication to treat a jaguar, or conducting a post-mortem on an animal.

The Zoo is home to more than 5,000 animals, and Delnatte loves the challenge of providing the best possible care for so many different species.

"The Toronto Zoo is an amazing place," she says. "Everyone works hard to make sure the animals are healthy and their welfare needs are met. The Zoo is also doing a lot for animals in the wild, including research, educating the public and promoting conservation, which is very important to me."

Her route to this position took her from veterinary school in Toulouse, France, through internships in Europe and St. Hyacinthe, Que., before she was accepted to the joint Toronto Zoo and OVC residency in September 2010.

"In this program, you do both clinical work at the Zoo, and research and pathology at OVC, which was wonderful for me. I was able to study a new bornavirus that was recently identified in wild geese and other waterfowl, and could be a threat for birds at the Zoo," she explains.

After graduation, Delnatte worked for two years in Quebec with the Canadian Wildlife Health Centre before joining the Toronto Zoo in 2015. In the fall of 2015, she passed the board certification of the American College of Zoological Medicine. Today, she is one of the clinical supervisors for the joint OVC Toronto Zoo program.



**Pauline Delnatte**



**The Dairy Health Management Continuing Education Program**, pioneered by OVC, welcomes a new cohort of dairy practitioners this spring. It includes 11 classroom modules with an online learning component, providing inten-

sive, science-based education for progressive dairy veterinarians to help them enhance the health, profitability and sustainability of dairy farms. For more information, contact Dr. Cynthia Miltenburg at miltenbu@uoguelph.ca.

## ALUMNI NEWS

# Dairy veterinary expertise dovetails with new role in industry

THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITY AT the right time took Chris Church's career in a new direction. A dairy cow veterinarian for 15 years, Church worked in mixed and dairy cattle practice since graduating from OVC in 2000. When an opportunity with Elanco Animal Health Canada opened up in 2015, Church brought his dairy practitioner expertise to a new role that sees him consulting with dairy producers, veterinarians and nutritionists from Ontario to British Columbia.

Herd health, embryo transfer and IVF had become passions for Church in his work with Tavistock Veterinarians in Tavistock, Ont. "This is where my experience really dovetailed into this role with Elanco," says Church, who works with dairy clients to troubleshoot issues with fresh and transition cows.

It is a collaborative model that draws on Church's clinical skills and his strengths in facilitating discussion.

"I meet with the herd veterinarian, nutritionist and farmer, and I am very much a quarterback – it's a team approach," he adds.

From the age of 11, Church envisioned a career as a companion animal



**Dr. Chris Church, DVM '00**

veterinarian, but that all changed when a mixed animal practitioner introduced him to his dairy farm. Church fell in love with the concept of herd health management and productivity. "We are not just practicing medicine anymore; the role of the dairy vet includes looking for ways to promote change on a dairy farm," adds Church, who is also a graduate of OVC's dairy health management certificate program.

"I feel blessed because I wasn't looking for the change necessarily but this opportunity opened," adds Church. "As our industry changes we have to change with it. We have to be proactive in looking at other ways we can use this great education."

## Companion animal practice a perfect fit for grad

Companion animal practice has been Paris Asghari's dream ever since she entered the Ontario Veterinary College in 2010. With previous experience working with companion animals, "I was pretty well-versed as to what I was getting myself into."

After graduating in 2014, she began working with Mount Pleasant Davisville Veterinary Hospital in Toronto. Mentorship was a key draw to the practice. "I can't stress enough how important mentorship is," says Asghari. "It is super, super important as a new grad to have a sounding board to bounce things off of and a clinic that practices good medicine. It's very difficult to set your foundation properly if you aren't practicing good medicine."

In fourth year, students have the opportunity to enter a stream in their preferred area. "It's fantastic because you can hone in on what you want, or think you want to do," says Asghari. She particularly enjoyed rotations in ophthalmology and surgery, but took something away from every rotation.

Her passions include dentistry (she considered an internship) and client communications. It's no surprise that the "Art of Veterinary Medicine" was a

**Dr. Frank Schofield**, an OVC professor known for his pioneering discoveries and involvement in Korea's independence movement, has been honoured with a commemorative plaque by the Canadian government. The plaque was com-



missioned by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, overseen by Parks Canada, and installed at OVC in December. Schofield, who died in 1970, graduated from OVC in 1910 and was a faculty member from 1921 to 1955.

## ALUMNI NEWS

# Grad blends swine practice with teaching

OWNING HER OWN SWINE veterinary practice wasn't Sue Burlatschenko's original plan, but that all changed in 1990. Her experience in the swine industry, both in a mixed practice and a stint working with purebred swine breeders with what was then known as the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, cemented the OVC 1984 grad's interest in this area of practice.

She now combines a boutique swine practice with teaching at Ridgeway College for a satisfying mix of challenges.

"Teaching is not for everybody," says Burlatschenko. "I really had to hone my skills, and it takes time to do that. It is a neat lateral move that can be really rewarding."

The animal health course she teaches covers four pillars: animal health and disease, euthanasia, appropriate use of antibiotics and communicating with the public. "It's what I call a toolbox course," she says. It provides practical knowledge for a "broad swath of kids – feather, dairy, swine and beef" in areas they will encounter in farming and agriculture-related industries.

"I like challenges and I like novelty," adds Burlatschenko. These traits drove her to complete a master of public health degree at OVC in 2013. "It



**Dr. Sue Burlatschenko with her bullmastiff, Milo.**

fit with population medicine and it certainly allowed me to get into other areas, including research."

Burlatschenko is also involved with Bracelet of Hope, an HIV/AIDS charity based in Guelph, and through this works with small-holder swine farmers in the African country of Lesotho. "My public health degree helped me to see that project in a new way. It's good to step outside of your normal and step into someone else's," she adds.

"Vet medicine to me offers a ton of flexibility. There are a lot of opportunities and sometimes you just have to make them rather than wait for them to come along."



**Dr. Paris Asghari, DVM '14**

favourite class throughout her studies at OVC. "I like getting to know people, relaying the information in a way they can understand and appreciate, and working together for the betterment of their pet."

General practice is the perfect fit for her, she adds. "I love it. It blends medicine with the communication aspect I love, as well as the business aspect. I think it is a perfect harmony of those three things."



Pathobiology professor **Patricia Turner** received the **Griffin Award** in October at the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS) annual meeting. Established in 1956, the Griffin Award is the association's oldest

award and recognizes an individual or group that has demonstrated ethical, scientific and/or technological advancements in improved animal care practices.

## ALUMNI NEWS

# Reproductive technology work changes career path

A DECISION TO RETURN to OVC for graduate studies changed Mike Neal's career direction. After completing a B.Sc. in biological science with a minor in biomedical sciences, he applied for a job in the U.S. Although he already had a strong skill set, the interviewer asked why he wasn't considering graduate work at OVC and U of G, "the centre of the universe for reproductive technology."

That decision and resulting graduate work in Prof. Allan King's lab in the Department of Biomedical Sciences ultimately led him to work in human IVF. Neal became the co-founder and scientific director of ONE Fertility ([www.onefertility.com](http://www.onefertility.com)), a full-service human fertility clinic established in 2008. The first clinic opened in Burlington in 2009, with satellite clinics in Windsor, Oakville and Mississauga. Another full-service clinic opened in Kitchener in 2013.

Neal oversees all laboratory operations, including endocrinology, andrology and IVF. With a primary interest in the field of embryology, he works in both the IVF and andrology labs. "This is a growing area," he says. "Awareness of fertility issues is greater today than it has ever been."

He adds that OVC is a world leader in reproductive technologies. "My M.Sc. degree not only provided me with a sound knowledge of assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs), it also provided me the tremendous opportunity to gain valuable experience handling animal gametes (sperm and oocytes) and embryos."

There are many connections between human and animal reproductive health. Most ARTs are tried first with animal models, says Neal.

He maintains a close connection to OVC, such as through



**Mike Neal is co-founder and scientific director of ONE Fertility**

ongoing research opportunities with biomedical sciences researchers investigating non-invasive assessment of embryo quality and microRNAs as indicators of embryo health.

Career paths are not always straight lines, Neal adds. "If you look at Allan King's graduates, the diversity of their careers and where they have landed related to their studies is a result of their training. His students are really making a mark."

Four OVC researchers received funding during a provincial government announcement in December. **Prof. Bonnie Mallard**, Department of Pathobiology, received a \$250,000 grant from the Large Scale Applied Research Pro-

gram to help develop genomics tools for selecting disease-resistant pigs. **Profs. Nicole Nemeth and Leonardo Susta**, Department of Pathobiology, received a \$125,000 grant from the Ontario Research Fund's Small Infrastructure

Fund to study viral pathogens in birds. **Prof. Thomas Koch**, Department of Biomedical Sciences, received a \$140,000 Early Researcher Award to study veterinary and human regenerative medicine.

## COLLEGE NEWS

# Animal and human health focus sets program apart

A CONNECTION TO OVC brings unique benefits to U of G's biomedical sciences major, providing students a pathway to animal or human health science careers.

"Within the biomedical sciences major there are so many areas you can specialize in. It really opens up a lot of doors," says Prof. Tarek Saleh, chair of OVC's Department of Biomedical Sciences. "Not only are graduates well-prepared for further studies in medical or veterinary medicine or biomedical research, they can also pursue any allied health profession such as dentistry, speech or physical therapy, optometry – anything you can do that is associated with human or animal health."

A part of OVC's biomedical sciences department for more than 25 years, the biomedical sciences major is offered jointly with the Department of Human Health and Nutritional Sciences in the College of Biological Science. The major focuses on human and animal health through the study of function, structure and basic medical sciences.

Core areas such as neuroscience, reproductive biology, pharmacology and toxicology, and the cellular and molecular basis of disease, particularly cardiovascular disease and cancer, are critical to the program. Several faculty in other departments within OVC also contribute to this program by bringing strengths in epidemiology and population health, infection and immunity, and pathobiology, adds Saleh.

Applications for the major are so high, admittance numbers increased from 185 to about 250 for the 2016-17 academic year. The program's popularity led to the highest entrance cut-off of any U of G bachelor of science degree.

Marnie Jakab, a 2014 grad, describes her four years as a biomedical sciences student among the most formative of her



**Biomedical science students Ndeye Konate, left, and Sophia Kerzner work on research projects in Prof. Jim Petrik's lab.**

life, building a strong professional foundation that helped her excel after graduation. "Beyond graduation, I have felt securely rooted and supported by my mentors at the U of G, with continued mentorship that has been invaluable to my success," says Jakab, who is now a member of the Class of 2020 medical school at Queen's University.

Students pursue a practicum or research course in fourth year, providing experiential learning opportunities. These may include exposure to IVF clinics, the Toronto Zoo's reproductive facility and artificial insemination companies. Students who pursue the research option become affiliated with a specific lab in OVC or in other departments at U of G. This type of experience also provides a perfect background for an M.Sc. program, adds Saleh.

Jessica Blom's fourth-year research project confirmed her interest in cardiovascular sciences. "This research unmask the world of scientific possibility for students while giving them experience in the field, which is often required of many graduate programs," says the 2010 grad, now a student in Western University's MD/PhD program. After earning a master's degree in cardiovascular biology, she is now focusing her PhD research on promoting blood vessel growth for cardiac repair after a heart attack. "As you can see, my original research at Guelph has led me a long way."



**Dr. Ken Leslie**, professor emeritus, was awarded the **2016 Metacam 20 Bovine Welfare Award** during the Canadian Association of Bovine Veterinarians (CABV) annual meeting in September. Presented annually by CABV and

Boehringer Ingelheim, the award recognizes achievements in advancing the welfare of animals through leadership, public service, education, research and/or advocacy.

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animal, food animal, equine or mixed. The most recent OVMA survey of 2016 grads showed more than 80 per cent began in practice, with 14 per cent seeking internships and six per cent in other areas.

“Far and away it is private practice for new graduates,” says Dr. Chris Doherty, economic analyst with OVMA and an OVC 2013 grad. “Most of them don’t go into industry or academia as soon as they graduate. They get a couple of years of private practice under their belts and then disperse into different career fields after a few years.” Doherty joined a private practice upon graduation before moving into the business side of veterinary medicine with OVMA a few years later.

Surveys by OVC five years out also show 100 per cent employment rates, with the most recent (the 2015 survey of 2011 grads) showing the majority of grads in practice at 86 per cent, with 14 per cent in academia, industry or not-for-profits.

The OVMA conducts a bimonthly index of the number of help wanted ads for associate veterinarians and veterinary employment. Adds Doherty, “We’ve never seen it higher than it is at this point, so obviously there is high demand for associates and for veterinary employment, which is great for our new grads.”

## ALUMNI NEWS

# OVC alumnus gives back with MMI involvement

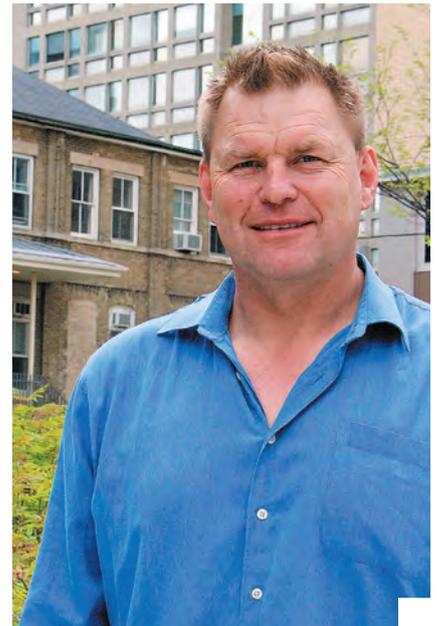
FOR THE PAST THREE years, each May has involved a red-eye flight for Dr. Peter Parke.

Five days and 200 interviews later, the OVC alum hops on another flight back to his mixed animal veterinary practice, Tsolum Mobile Veterinary Health, near Courtenay, B.C., on the east coast of Vancouver Island.

In between Parke participates in almost every session of OVC’s Multiple Mini Interviews (MMIs) to select student veterinarian candidates for the next academic year’s cohort. In 2016, this involved meeting 192 of 200 students attending the MMIs.

Parke says he does it to give back to the University of Guelph “because it was a big player in my life. I really enjoyed not only the academic but the athletic communities as well.” But the MMI process is also an important piece. “I’m interested in education and I’m interested in the interview process,” he adds. “I want to meet prospective students and see what the future of our industry looks like.”

Parke completed an M.Sc. in animal breeding at the Ontario Agricultural College before entering OVC. He completed his DVM in 2000 and returned to Vancouver Island to mixed-animal practice.



**Dr. Peter Parke gives back by participating in the Multiple Mini Interviews at OVC.**

The week he spends in Guelph is also an opportunity to connect with students who may be interested in an externship or elective rotation with his Vancouver Island practice. “That is the key to a successful veterinary career: what you do on your externships,” he adds. “I like to meet with them during the week to get to know them,” he adds. “This is important so we can develop relationships and have a continuous flow of good students into our practice.”

A pioneer in cattle embryo transfer technology was recognized with an honorary doctorate at U of G's fall 2016 convocation ceremonies. **Dr. Reuben Mapletoft**, DVM '67, emeritus professor in the Western College of Veterinary



Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan, is an expert in veterinary reproduction. His research in theriogenology has earned him recognition in Canada and around the world.

## COLLEGE NEWS

# Construction begins for new surgery and anesthesia facilities

AN OVC PET TRUST fundraising campaign launched in fall 2015, Friends Together for Longer, is coming to life in the form of new surgery and anesthesia facilities at OVC's Health Sciences Centre. The new spaces will enhance the learning experience for students and offer advanced and complex care for pets.

"The new facilities will ensure that OVC continues to be a centre of excellence in the world of animal health, and remain at the forefront of veterinary education, science and medicine," said Jeff Wichtel, OVC dean. "They will help ensure our continued ability to improve the health and well-being of pets, whether we are providing advanced diagnosis or life-saving procedures, raising the standard of care, or making meaningful contributions to clinical research and innovation."

Construction of the new surgical spaces will begin in spring 2017 at the OVC Companion Animal Hospital.

Major leadership gifts have been instrumental in the renovations:

- A \$2.5-million gift from La Fondation Emmanuelle Gattuso will create the James Slight Advanced Surgical Complex, which will include multiple operating rooms equipped to offer a vast number of routine and



**Concept drawing of OVC's new surgery and anesthesia facilities.**

advanced surgical procedures.

- \$1.5 million from Kim and Stu Lang's Angel Gabriel Foundation will be used to construct a new Anesthesia and Pain Management Unit, which will offer a specialized space for anesthetizing patients and preparing pets for surgery.
- A \$1-million donation from Lindy Barrow will create the Lindy Barrow Minimally Invasive Procedures Suite, an area equipped with computer-controlled technology, which will promote faster recovery time and less post-operative pain for pets.
- A \$500,000 estate gift in memory of John and Jean Waller will build the Anesthesia Recovery Room, a dedi-

cated space for pets to ensure they have a calm, smooth recovery.

"We are very grateful to all of our generous donors for supporting our new facilities," said Kim Robinson, managing director of OVC Pet Trust. "We are, however, still working towards reaching our goal of raising \$9 million. Donors can direct their gifts to OVC Pet Trust's area of greatest need to help us finish the project."

Hospital renovations will coincide with construction of new clinical teaching and learning spaces at OVC, announced earlier in 2016 and funded by a \$23-million investment from the provincial government. Construction of these spaces will begin in 2017.



**Dr. Jessica Gordon**, Population Medicine, was selected for the Beef Cattle Research Council's **2016-17 Beef Researcher Mentorship Program**. The program aims to connect young bovine researchers with producers and repre-

sentatives from the Canadian beef industry. Gordon's most recent beef cattle research surveyed Ontario's cow-calf industry to understand management practices and better target research and extension for its needs.

## ALUMNI NEWS

# New entrance scholarship created by OVC 1964

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF the OVC Class of 1964 not only sparked a celebration of the class's achievements, it led to a new entrance scholarship. In addition to reunions in both Western Canada and Guelph and a 50-year history book with information on each class member, the class donated \$35,000 to create an endowed OVC 1964 Entrance Scholarship to honour this significant anniversary.

Designated for a student entering Phase 1 of the DVM program, the scholarship is presented to a student who has demonstrated the greatest leadership and experience with food animals before entering the program.

The inaugural recipient is Matthew Bates, OVC 2020. "The OVC '64 committee commends Matthew Bates as a highly qualified recipient and wishes to thank the selection committee for their choice," says Dr. Bert Mitchell, OVC 1964. "We



**Dr. Carlton Gyles, OVC 1964 and U of G professor emeritus, presents the inaugural award to Matthew Bates, OVC 2020.**

wish him great personal satisfaction and success as he pursues a life in veterinary medicine."

Bates was raised on a cow/calf operation in rural Ontario, which fueled his dedication for food animal production and medicine. "It is very inspiring that OVC 1964 has created an award to recognize veterinary students who have developed a passion in this area," he says.

## OVC 2006 and 2004 create memorial award

The classmates in OVC 2006 and 2004, along with family and friends of the late Tammi Weekes-Lentz, have created an award to honour her legacy of changing the world with one small act of kindness at a time and her commitment to her dream of becoming a veterinarian.

The Dr. Tammi Weekes-Lentz Memorial Award is presented to a DVM student



**Dr. Wendy Wideman, OVC 2006, presents the inaugural award to Andrew O'Ree, OVC 2017.**

in Phase 3 or 4 as chosen by a class vote. "I think Tammi would be happy that other students are being helped," says classmate Dr. Wendy Wideman, OVC 2006. "This award in her memory continues her legacy of generosity and genuine care for people and animals alike."

Donations are still being accepted to support this award. Please contact Sonia Randhawa, alumni affairs advancement manager, at [soniar@uoguelph.ca](mailto:soniar@uoguelph.ca) for more information.

An OVC cancer researcher has made the top 10 list of the most influential Hispanic Canadians for 2016. **Alicia Vilorio-Petit**, a biomedical sciences professor and an investigator in OVC's Institute for Comparative Cancer Investiga-

tion, was recognized for her cancer research. She was among the first to show that drugs known as EGFR-type kinase inhibitors indirectly inhibit the formation of new blood vessels necessary for solid tumours to grow. This dis-

covery led to a better understanding of how EGFR kinase-targeting antibodies block tumour growth, influencing their clinical approval. These drugs include Herceptin and Erbitux, currently used to treat a subset of cancers.

## ALUMNI NEWS



From left, Dr. Kadri Uukkivi, OVC 2007, and Erin's parents Darrel and Chris Stewart (right) present the inaugural award to Patrick Boelsterli, OVC 2017.

# Class of 2007 honours classmate with memorial scholarship

THE OVC 2007 CLASSMATES, family and friends of Erin Leis (Stewart) have donated \$30,000 to create a new endowed scholarship in memory of Leis, who passed away in 2012.

The scholarship recognizes a DVM student at OVC who is an active member of any club within the college and who contributes to student life.

The inaugural scholarship was presented to Patrick Boelsterli, OVC

2017, in 2015. The 2016 award went to Shannon Finn, OVC 2018. "Erin's award was created by our class as a way to remember her and her contributions both inside and outside of our OVC class," says classmate Dr. Kadri Uukkivi. "Erin was an active participant in life and is missed dearly. In the time she was here, she made a huge impact on all those who were fortunate to know her."

## Summer job provides window to inspection services career

A summer job posting with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) provided Class of 2018 student veterinarian Eric Alder with a strong overview of the many areas where CFIA veterinarians work. While Alder's sights are set on mixed animal practice following graduation, the experience provided a window into alternative career opportunities.

"Eric gained valuable experience on the front line of our agency's day-to-day operations," says Dr. Lois Valli, OVC 1991, CFIA regulatory veterinary medicine liaison with OVC.

He made a number of trips to U.S.-Canada border crossings to assist with imports of animals, including performing physical exams, checking paperwork and tags. He also assisted with blood draws to test swine for disease prior to exporting their semen, visited the airport as RCMP horses returned from a trip to Europe, and received hands-on experience testing birds during an avian influenza (AI) outbreak near St. Catharines last summer.

"Every poultry farm, whether it's someone's backyard flock or a big production, we went in and tested their birds for AI to determine if we had to do any mitigation on their property," he says.



**Dr. Ole Nielsen, DVM '56**, former dean of OVC, was named a **Member of the Order of Canada** in July 2016 in recognition of his contributions to veterinary medicine in Canada as an academic and an administrator. Nielsen

served as the eighth dean of OVC from 1985 to 1994. During his tenure, he established the Department of Population Medicine, the Veterinary Teaching Hospital (now the Health Sciences Centre) and initiated OVC Pet Trust.

## ALUMNI NEWS

### Grad one year out

OMAR ZAHEER HOPES TO specialize in avian and exotic veterinary medicine. Right now, the OVC 2016 grad is working at the Veterinary Emergency Clinic in Toronto as a small-animal rotating intern, moving between different specialties and learning from an elite team of veterinarians, veterinary technicians and animal care attendants. The experience is providing him with a broad range of skills due to a high volume case load and many complex cases.

Besides extremely long hours, he says the biggest challenge is “shifting from being someone who always has help and guidance to a position where people often look to you for guidance and assistance.” That felt uncomfortable at first, he says, but eventually “you realize you do have the required knowledge.”

Zaheer says OVC prepared him well for this work, not just in teaching him practical veterinary skills, but in emphasizing the art of veterinary medicine. “A large portion of this work is client communication, collaborating and teaching.”



**Dr. Omar Zaheer, DVM '16**

He advises new grads to be very deliberate about finding their first job or placement to be certain it includes good mentorship.

Zaheer adds: “It’s good to keep pictures, notes or letters from clients that remind you why you wanted to be a veterinarian in the first place for those discouraging days when nothing seems to be going well. In the end, it is a very rewarding job that helps bring people and animals together, and gives us an important role as advocates for animal health and happiness.”

## COMING EVENTS

### WEEK OF MAY 15

OVC Mini Multiple Interviews

For more information, contact Elizabeth Lowenger at [lowenger@uoguelph.ca](mailto:lowenger@uoguelph.ca) or 519-824-4120, Ext. 54430

### JUNE 9 AND 10

Alumni Weekend, University of Guelph  
OVC Alumni Association

Welcome Breakfast and AGM (June 9)  
OVC Lifetime Learning Centre

### WEEK OF JUNE 12

OVC Convocation  
War Memorial Hall

### JULY 13 TO 16

Canadian Veterinary Medical Association  
2017 Convention  
Charlottetown, PEI

For more information or to register for any events, please contact Sonia Randhawa, alumni affairs advancement manager, at [soniar@uoguelph.ca](mailto:soniar@uoguelph.ca) or 519-824-4120, Ext. 56679.

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#### Writing/Editing

Susan Bubak

Karen Mantel

Ashleigh Martyn

Stacey Morrison

Teresa Pitman

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Karen Mantel  
OVC Communications  
519-824-4120, Ext. 52746, or  
[kmantel@uoguelph.ca](mailto:kmantel@uoguelph.ca)

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