Leaders in educational innovation for modern veterinary practice

O. Lynne Nelson, DVM, MS, DACVIM*; Marcia Hill Gossard, PhD; Robert H. Mealey, DVM, PhD, DACVIM; Dori L. Borjesson, DVM, PhD, DACVP

College of Veterinary Medicine, Washington State University, Pullman, WA
*Corresponding author: Dr. Nelson (olnelson@wsu.edu)
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First veterinary applied laparoscopic training laboratory

Drs. Boel Fransson and Claude Ragle in Washington State University’s (WSU) Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences developed the first virtual laparoscopic training program for veterinary surgeons. The new virtual reality program allows veterinarians to simulate entire laparoscopic procedures, including potential complications. Surgeons from 38 different institutions on 3 continents have trained through the program. Comments from previous trainees include, “I would not be doing a lot of the surgeries I am today without it.” The Veterinary Applied Laparoscopic Training Laboratory is dedicated to improving instruction in minimally invasive surgery. Work in the lab led to the first Veterinary Assessment of Laparoscopic Skills program, which provides training and certification in laparoscopic techniques designed to improve surgical outcomes in veterinary patients.

First veterinary education teaching academy in the western region

The college’s Teaching Academy, led by Dr. Susan Matthew, is the first of its kind in veterinary schools in the western US. It is a scholarly community of educators offering educational training, academic career preparation, and career development opportunities to graduate students, veterinary residents, and faculty members. The college’s Teaching Academy was a catalyst for the creation of the 7-member Teaching Academy of the Consortium of West Region Colleges of Veterinary Medicine. In 2022, 692 people attended Teaching Academy events: 151 from the college, broader WSU, and regional teaching academy. The Teaching Academy’s educational research grants program has funded 17 projects since inception, resulting in 6 peer-reviewed publications and numerous conference presentations.

First nationally accredited simulation-based education

Dr. Julie Cary led the effort for the nation’s first simulation program accredited by the Society for Simulation in Healthcare with a focus on veterinary medicine. The Clinical Simulation Center provides students, veterinarians, and veterinary technicians access to some of the most advanced medical models to learn and polish skills in a positive, enriching, and supportive educational environment. In addition to life-sized cows and horses, simulation models include small animal intubation and resuscitation models and a technical simulation room that simulates many types of operating room, emergency room, and anesthesia situations. Realistic, low-risk environments prioritize animal and student welfare, leading to dynamic and advanced educational outcomes. Peer-reviewed studies from WSU have demonstrated the benefits of simulation-based education by documenting improvement in anesthesia-related patient care and surgical performance.

First veterinary paraprofessional certificate program in the country

WSU created the first veterinary medicine paraprofessional training program to prepare skilled professionals to meet today’s veterinary workforce needs. Dr. Hilary Koenigs directs the Veterinary Paraprofessional Certificate Program, which could help alleviate some of the most pressing issues facing the veterinary profession, including staffing shortages and burnout from long hours, high workloads, and stress. The veterinary scribe certificate combines online learning that can be completed anywhere with hands-on training in a clinical setting. Students can complete a certificate in as little as a month and will leave prepared for new roles in veterinary clinics and hospitals that will enhance client care and ease workloads for veterinarians and technicians.