The College of Veterinary Medicine at North Carolina State University (NC State) is a world leader in providing advanced clinical training to residents across more than 25 specialties. This year, NC State welcomed a class of 27 residents to begin their advanced training who will soon join the landscape of specialty veterinary medicine across the globe. However, the veterinary workforce is facing critical shortages. To address this shortage in the coming years, we will require a new generation of educators and researchers to refill and expand the academic workforce. The creation of the Veterinary Academic Leaders (VAL) Fellowship Program at NC State is designed to introduce veterinary residents in training to the many facets of academic veterinary medicine and help them cultivate their own passion to become the future leaders of veterinary teaching institutions. North Carolina State University aims to increase the number of residents in training who pursue advanced research training and join the academic workforce on completion of their training programs. We are committed to developing the next generation of innovators and educators in academia.

The VAL Fellowship Program was launched in the fall of 2023 and competitively admitted 10 fellows representing 9 different specialties from the incoming resident class. The program provides dedicated research funding and monthly dinner meetings and training sessions focused on the following 5 pillars of preparation for an academic veterinary career.

### Professional Skills and Preparation

This focus area goes through the principles of developing a compelling curriculum vitae, prepares candidates for interviews and negotiations, reviews types of academic positions such as clinical versus tenure track, discusses promotion and tenure, and identifies postresidency training opportunities.

### Research

A primary goal of the VAL Fellowship Program is developing a research focus and participating in scientific discovery. To achieve this goal, the fellows each write an intramural grant, participate in peer reviews, and receive a $10,000 grant to accomplish their work. Special topics are presented on developing a hypothesis, defining a research focus, writing grants, identifying funding opportunities, and presenting compelling research talks. Funding is specifically earmarked for each fellow to permit submission of their work to a journal and to support conference attendance to present their research.

### Teaching and Mentoring

Training opportunities in teaching and mentoring are an important component for future academic leaders. Topics that are highlighted in the VAL Fellowship Program include preparing a first lecture, developing learning objectives, writing exam questions, developing a teaching portfolio, mentoring trainees, and providing feedback. In addition to each of these special topics, the VAL fellows will join the already established academy of educators where they can participate in education-focused training opportunities.

### Career Wellness

Building a healthy and sustainable career is the focus of this pillar, where VAL fellows will discuss topics including work-life balance, time management, and financial freedom.

### Camaraderie

The program provides time for the fellows to get to know each other and visit with the speakers and topic hosts with the goal of promoting community and team building. NC State is proud to be developing the veterinary academic leaders of the future and will seat our second class this fall. We hope that other institutions will follow suit and help grow this important segment of our veterinary workforce.

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