

Cooperative Veterinary Education Program Montana State University & Washington State University - An MUS Initiative Prepared May 2012

Background

Currently, Montana students interested in a career in veterinary medicine may access programs through the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) coordinated by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). About 50% of these students return to Montana for veterinary practice, but few of them return to large animal or food animal practices. A new approach is needed to increase the overall return rate and to address workforce shortages.

Some states in the WICHE region have established cooperative regional veterinary programs with specific veterinary schools. These specific cooperative agreements allow state campuses to engage their own faculty in veterinary education, to maintain connections with their own students, and to engage the state's veterinary professional workforce in the education, recruitment, and retention of the future veterinary workforce.

Structure and Partners

The Cooperative Veterinary Medical Education Program will be administratively located on the Montana State University (MSU) campus in Bozeman. The regional partner will be the Washington State University (WSU) College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM). Montana students accepted into the WSU CVM would get their first year of professional veterinary education at MSU and would get their subsequent three years of advanced training at WSU CVM sites. Clinical education sites will be available in Washington and may also be developed in Montana.

Teaching faculty at MSU will include personnel from the College of Agriculture and the College of Letters and Sciences. This new program will be developed with an admissions process to encourage greater interest in food animal veterinary practice as a career path and to retain these new professionals for practice in Montana.

The full proposal is in the process of curricular review at MSU and at OCHE. The proposal will come to the Board of Regents (BOR) for action at the November meeting. One-time-only (OTO) start-up costs are estimated at \$250-500,000, and annual operating costs for the first-year program at MSU are estimated at \$518,750. It is hoped that expenses for years two through four will be approximately the same per-student cost as the current WSU rate for the WICHE program (~\$30,000/student/year). If the BOR decides to offer this new program in lieu of the WICHE PSEP, the expenses for the new approach could be offset partially by funds currently dedicated to the WICHE PSEP.

Alternatively, the BOR could choose to maintain access that the current WICHE PSEP offers for nine Montana students. (WICHE PSEP allows students to choose from a variety of veterinary schools.) The new program then would expand access to ten additional students with a targeted approach that keeps students in Montana for the first year of professional education and focuses on the need in Montana for large animal veterinarians.