

Harvard Alumni in Animal Health

Concept Proposal

April 23, 2017

Background

Animals occupy a broad niche in our society, from household companions considered members of the family to sources of food and clothing, from a means of biomedical discovery and drug testing to wild animals celebrated and protected on their own merits. Encounters with domesticated and captive animals are encouraged from an early age and often inspire life decisions to work with, on, and for animals for one's entire career. Even for those not professionally engaged in an animal-related activity, the ubiquity of animals in our culture and the array of feelings they engender stimulates much discourse while driving many segments of the economy. A growing realization of how connected we are to animals, ranging from personal emotional attachment to pandemic threats of emerging diseases, will keep the subject of animals front and center for years to come. On a related note, fostering the health and well-being of animals will become ever more important as our concept of responsible animal stewardship continues to evolve. It is in response to these societal trends that a Shared Interest Group (SIG) of the Harvard Alumni Association (HAA) is proposed for Animal Health.

Over 200 Harvard alumni/ae are identified in the HAA database as either veterinarians or engaged in an animal-related industry, many of whom responded enthusiastically to a preliminary survey of interest. Given the ubiquity of human-animal interactions described above, coupled with the diversity of interests and avocations amongst Harvard graduates around the world, we are confident that a SIG devoted to animal health will attract many more active participants in short order and lead to robust discussions and initiatives on many fronts. To wit, Harvard Business School offers a popular executive education course on agribusiness that attracts participants from animal agriculture and affiliated companies worldwide; Harvard Law School maintains an Animal Law & Policy Program and is the base for an energetic Student Animal Legal Defense Fund; biomedical researchers and physicians at Harvard Medical School and its affiliated teaching hospitals routinely use laboratory animals as models of human illness and injury to develop new drugs and vaccines for incurable diseases; Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences includes professors who study how animals function and behave in their natural setting, for the sake of basic knowledge and as environmental bellwethers in the face of habitat destruction and climate change; Harvard Divinity School has occasionally featured speakers and scholarship about the role of animals in various religions. All of these endeavors involving animals represent a large and diverse audience in the Harvard community and its graduates to whom this SIG is directed. In addition, we anticipate this SIG will provide a valuable network of contacts and mentors to current Harvard pre-veterinary undergraduates and to graduate and professional

students engaged in other animal health-related careers.

Membership

Harvard Alumni in Animal Health is a SIG open to any alumnus/a of any Harvard University program who is interested in any aspect of animal health and who has completed at least nine weeks of formal coursework at any of the schools of the University (including Harvard College, Radcliffe College, and all Harvard graduate, professional, and extension schools). In addition, those with at least one full year of academic experience at Harvard beyond simply employment are eligible; these can include research fellows and post-docs, legal interns, medical residents at Harvard-affiliated teaching hospitals, and others. The Executive Committee or its designated body will review applicants in this latter category to determine eligibility and approve membership.

An initial marketing and recruiting campaign will start with knowledgeable Harvard alumni/ae and faculty who can help spread the word through their respective networks to attract members and volunteers. In addition and leveraging contact information provided by HAA, we will reach out to the leadership of all current (53) HAA SIG's to invite their members to consider joining our SIG.

Harvard degree holders are full members – they are invited to attend events, serve on and chair committees, participate in other SIG activities, permitted to vote, and may seek office on the Board. Members who do not hold a degree bestowed by the University but have met the minimum criteria for inclusion stated above will be Associate Members – they are welcome to attend events, serve on committees, participate in other SIG activities but may not vote or serve as officers on the Board. A majority of SIG members must be Full Members, i.e., Harvard degree holders, in order for the SIG to maintain its HAA-approved status.

Members will share a commitment to the mission and goals of this SIG as outlined in this concept proposal and further developed over time. Members will conduct themselves in a manner respectful of others' views and will welcome the sharing of viewpoints that may conflict with their own.

Annual dues may be required to cover operating costs and shall be set initially by the founding trustees and thereafter reviewed by the Board of Directors annually (TBD).

Goals

- To connect graduates of Harvard University both in person and virtually, nationally and internationally, who share an interest in animal health
- To build networks to help Harvard graduates develop personal and professional relationships at any stage in their careers or interests in this field
- To develop animal health-centered activities related to Harvard and in support of Harvard such as educational symposia

- To promote the advancement of animal health-related disciplines (including the social sciences and humanities) by and for Harvard graduates
- To encourage undergraduate, graduate, and professional students with career aspirations in animal health and provide them interim opportunities such as summer internships or research projects
- To create and sustain an inviting, vibrant, stimulating, and productive organization, anchored by fair and transparent governance and sound finances

Possible Initiatives

- Identify and develop a database of Harvard alumni/ae who are currently working or otherwise interested in animal health fields
- Establish a website, list-serve, and social network as an interface through which members can communicate with each other and share news and resources with the broader network
- Issue occasional notices announcing meetings and other activities, job listings and career opportunities, profiles of accomplished alumni/ae, upcoming on-campus and Harvard-affiliated activities in the field
- Co-host events and interact with local alumni clubs around issues of animal health
- Provide a helpful source of internships and mentoring opportunities for current students at all levels, including but not limited to undergraduate pre-vets and recent graduates in the field
- Provide networking opportunities for young professionals or those in mid-career looking for a change
- Explore formal exchanges and collaborations between SIG members and Harvard faculty across a wide range of intellectual disciplines related to animal health (including the social sciences and humanities)

Governance

Governance will be conducted as stated in the Harvard Alumni in Animal Health Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation.

There will be a president, vice president, treasurer and corresponding secretary. These officers shall be elected by full members in good standing in regularly scheduled elections every two years.

The maximum term for elected officers is two consecutive periods of three years. Additional officers or board members shall be elected or appointed as outlined in the Bylaws.

The Board shall consist of the Executive Committee and a maximum of eight additional members. While only degreed alumni/ae are eligible to run for office,

others may serve on committees, created and managed at the discretion of the Board. Additionally, we anticipate inviting up to two current students as non-voting members of the Board, so that we can stay apprised of campus happenings and current student life, and keep our organization relevant to recent graduates. The student positions do not count toward the total number of Board members.

Continuity will be ensured by actively identifying, involving, and training new leadership talent.

Initial Contacts and Founding Board Members

- Steven M. Niemi, AB '75, DVM, Director, Office of Animal Resources, Harvard University Faculty of Arts and Sciences, sniemi@fas.harvard.edu
- Casey L. Cazer, AB '12, DVM, PhD Candidate, Biological and Biomedical Sciences Graduate Program, Cornell University, clcazer@gmail.com
- Michelle White, AB '05, DVM, PhD Candidate, Biological and Biomedical Sciences Graduate Program, Cornell University, michellewhite.com@gmail.com