Strategy 4.1: Identify pressing societal problems where the School can make an impact and align efforts to develop meaningful solutions

Date: Semiannual Report – May 2013

Summary of Activities
A preliminary survey was conducted October 2012 to January 2013 to obtain SVM input on the pressing societal problems that the SVM and veterinary profession could/should address with significant and lasting impact. Over 70 responses from students (20), faculty (22), staff (19) and others were received which will assist in guiding our efforts to obtain input and broader representation from additional student (graduate, MPVM and professional), resident and alumni groups. We have also initiated a effort, in collaboration with staff in Academic Programs, Development and SVM communications to obtain stories of the activities and accomplishments of our alumni from the DVM, MPVM, graduate and resident programs to illustrate how they are meeting societal needs. These stories, along with those from our faculty will be selected to demonstrate the variety of ways that the SVM has contributed and continues working to find meaningful solutions to pressing problems that affect animal, human and environmental health in California and globally.

Several faculty positions within the area of infectious disease epidemiology, animal agriculture, food safety, manure management and vectorborne disease control were either filled or searches initiated during the first six months of this calendar year. The MPVM program is transitioning to a graduate group and a search for the new director is underway. The move to VM3B is nearing completion, with many of the programs that will occur in this new building addressing societal concerns (emerging infectious disease, public health, food safety, drug discovery, etc.).

Resource Materials / Data Analysis

Results from over 70 faculty and students who responded to the survey at https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BX76RBW (based on a scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) indicated that over 50% agreed (4) or strongly agreed (5) that the SVM could help solve the following problems under the categories of :

**Animal Care and Well-being**
- Improved quality of companion animal care
- Train more veterinary clinicians specialists
- Improve care of wildlife in captivity
- Provide clinical services to rural communities

The most ‘pressing societal needs’ in this category of Animal care and well-being—Overall with the greatest support (50% agreed or strongly agreed) were for a. Improved quality of companion animal care and d. Provide clinical services to rural communities. Additional needs identified by the respondents included: Save wildlife from extinction (e.g. Mountain Gorilla One Health Program and...
Sea Doc), expand veterinary training to be more practical and affordable for a wider population of animals and train clinicians in areas of need such as rural, laboratory and governmental veterinary medicine, increase spay and neutering of pet and feral animals, improve client education and access to authoritative resources, and improve quality of life for food animals.

Under **Environmental conservation and sustainability** over 77% of respondents felt that the following were ‘pressing societal needs:

Environmental conservation and sustainability – Overall

- Increase sustainability of agriculture
- Improve habitat conservation and wildlife biodiversity
- Mitigate impacts of climate change

Of the issues in this category 50% of respondents indicated that the SVM could contribute to environmental conservation and sustainability overall but on specific issues a-c the greatest proportion was uncertain (scored 3) as to our ability to solve the problem. Comments varied from those who felt that animals contribute to conservation and sustainability and veterinary medicine has a role to play from this perspective to indicating that this was not within the scope of the SVM and would be best addressed by CA&ES, Law and Engineering.

In Category 3 **Food animal & production agriculture**, Category 4 **Infectious Disease and Category 5 Chronic Disease** all of the issues listed on the survey were considered by over 50-75% of respondents to be both pressing societal problems and problems that the SVM can help to solve. Comments relating to these categories provided additional support including “Food security and sustainability are required by all humanity and the role of VM in assuring security of animal systems and overall food safety is through pre-harvest and public health is essential for humanity” and advocacy for efforts focused on prevention and monitoring methods for infectious disease in partnership with government and industry, judicial use of antimicrobial agents and importance of vectorborne disease control efforts. Under chronic disease, which included improve prevention and treatment of cancer, reduce impact of genetic disorders and reduce obesity and improve nutrition, additional comments from respondents suggested that the SVM should advise on holistic practices and integrative medicine for the treatment of chronic conditions, as well provide human nutritional information and education.

Additional recommendations for other important societal needs that should be addressed by the SVM and stories of how our alumni are contributing to solving these problems have been compiled and will be considered in final summary after surveys have been completed.

**Upcoming Activities / Initiatives**

The MPVM program is transitioning to a graduate group and Ashley Hill has been elected as the first director for this new Graduate Group in Preventive Veterinary Medicine. A wide range of administrative structural changes are underway which should foster programmatic growth, increased enrollment, and expansion of curricular offerings. Graduates of this program have addressed many pressing societal problems over the years both here in the US and internationally.

**Accomplishments**

1. SVM hired an Assistant Specialist in Cooperative Extension (CE) in poultry health and food safety epidemiology. This statewide extension program will develop disease control practices to protect California’s poultry industry and promote food safety for commodities such as California’s broiler and laying chickens, turkeys and game birds.

2. SVM hired an Assistant CE Specialist / AES in PHR in Microbial Waste Management. Numerous microbiological hazards such as food and waterborne zoonotic diseases can be
associated with improperly managed animal manure. This new interdisciplinary position will assist California’s agricultural industry develop new management systems for the large amount of animal manure that is generated each year.

3. SVM has selected the candidate to fill the Assistant/Associate Professor of Virology position in PMI and the Center for Vectorborne Disease. In addition to contributing to teaching and developing a creative, independent and productive research program, this new faculty member will provide public service to relevant state and local health and veterinary programs through applied research work, diagnostics and service.

4. Faculty and staff from several Departments, Centers, and Institutes moved into Vet Med 3B and are busy adapting their academic programs to the resources of this modern building. The open design is intended to foster new interdisciplinary teams and programs, many of which will address pressing societal issues.

5. The search was initiated for a CE Assistant Specialist / AES in PHR in Urban Agricultural Food Safety. This new position will focus on developing and implementing new food safety programs for this growing niche of direct marketing operations, farmers markets, and the local food movement.