

Spotlight on a School

AVAR Gives Donation to University of California for Dissection Alternative



AVAR is contributing to a UC Davis project to develop computer software that will replace traditional classroom dissection of animals such as frogs.

AVAR donated \$10,000 to the University of California, Davis, to assist the Center for Animal Alternatives in developing computer software laboratories to replace traditional classroom dissection using rats, cats, fetal pigs, and frogs. The gift will be used to create a prototype of the human respiratory system for seventh-graders—the prototype being part of a much larger project of virtual organ systems called Biology Safaris. The final product will be available on the Internet and will be free to anyone with a computer.

Much of the data for the human respiratory prototype will come from the Visible Human database, which is part of the National Library of Medicine's project of an anatomically detailed, three-dimensional representation of normal male and female human bodies.

The complete project as envisioned will include eight Biology Safari modules representing the musculo-skeletal, digestive,

cardiovascular, nervous, reproductive, respiratory, visual, and auditory systems. Three of these modules—circulatory, respiratory, and digestive—will be more fully developed with detailed aspects of the anatomy and physiology of each system, including comparative anatomy, medical technology, key cellular components, and health and disease information in conformity with national science content standards. In addition to human biology, each system features sub-modules on comparative nonhuman examples of anatomy. Similar software programs are available to veterinary medical students for anatomy and surgery training.

In the current production stage, focus groups of intermediate school teachers and students will review the concept design and prototype. After completing the design of the prototype, the project will be submitted to the National Science Foundation (and perhaps other sources of major support), with a request to fund the major portion of the project to its completion.

AVAR supports this effort because educational programs, in particular, veterinary medical education, should embrace an attitude of respect for life. Using millions of frogs in secondary education for dissection, for example, has put some species at risk of extinction. Furthermore, students become desensitized to the value of nonhuman animals when the animals are treated as if they were tools, and students often do not remember anything about the dissection exercise other than dislike for cutting apart an animal. All sciences courses should expose students to current views on animal use and should encourage students to want to learn about science rather than ask them to compromise their beliefs by participating in the harming or killing of animals.

The University of California's Center for Animal Alternatives is seeking monetary donations to help develop the Biology Safaris computer software alternative to animal dissection. If you are interested in making a donation to this effort, contact Lynette Hart, Director, UC Center for Animal Alternatives at lahart@ucdavis.edu.

Western University SCAVAR Celebrates Third Year With Growing Membership and Expanded Activities

*Briana Mirchel, SCAVAR President
Class of 2009*

Western University of Health Sciences School of Veterinary Medicine

As we enter the third year since the induction of the SCAVAR chapter at Western University, our membership has nearly tripled!!! We attribute this partly to the fact that there are no club fees and no dietary or philosophical requirements; all we ask is that students come to the table with an open mind.

The main goal of our club is to disseminate information about issues that are important regarding the health and well-being of animals and to stimulate discussion from both sides. One of our prized members, Minden Buswell, is actually also the president of the Farm Animal Medicine Club. Her goal is to teach ways to improve conditions for farmed animals by making welfare a priority for farmers. Her opinion is highly valued, as she gives us insight into the lives of farmers and helps us understand the problems they face. This knowledge will help us figure out how to incorporate solutions for the farmers with those that improve farmed animal life.

We also like to help organizations that are actively working to remedy these issues, whether it be by fundraising for them or by volunteering our time at such places as Animal Acres, the Helen Woodward Animal Center, and Baja Animal Sanctuary.

To bring attention to important issues, we also plan to have speakers come in on a variety of topics, as well as to show documentaries. Recently, we had Lorri Bauston of Animal Acres come talk to our "Veterinary Issues" class on the topic of farmed animal welfare. The night before, we organized an optional viewing of "Peaceable Kingdom," and it had a profound effect on almost all who viewed it.

We also have just started compiling a list of students from all campus colleges into a "Veggie Support Network" to assist newly turned vegetarians/vegans, to spread health and dietary information, to share recipes, and to host veggie food events. As a fundraiser for SCAVAR, we hope to hold an International

Vegetarian Food Night, where we will serve vegetarian entrees from around the world.

Our most exciting event will be coming up this spring, when we plan to hold an "Advocacy Workshop" which will be open to all health professional students and will give people the tools to help enact change with an issue that is, or will be, important to them while out in the medical field.

We would love to assist and support any student looking to start their own SCAVAR chapter at other veterinary schools. For more info about our SCAVAR, check out our Web site at <http://ws.westernu.edu/cvm/avar/Entrance.html>. I would also like to extend a huge thank you for all the awesome work and support of our members, especially our officers:

Zarah Hedge, Vice President, Class of 2009
McGee Leonard, Secretary, Class of 2009
James Ransom, Web Coordinator, Class of 2009
Dainna Stelmach, Treasurer, Class of 2009
Dr. Heather Nevill, Faculty Advisor