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NEWS & EVENTS

New Faculty Join CVM

The MU College of Veterinary Medicine is pleased to welcome one new faculty member to the Department of Biomedical Sciences and two new members to the Department of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery.

Nicole Nichols, PhD

Joining the Department of Biomedical Sciences this semester as an assistant professor is Nicole Nichols, PhD.

Nichols earned a PhD in biomedical sciences, concentrating on neuroscience and physiology, at Wright State University's Boonshoft School of Medicine in Dayton, Ohio. She then joined the University of Wisconsin in Madison as a postdoctoral fellow in respiratory neurobiology.

In her new position at the MU CVM, Nichols' primary focus will be conducting research, in addition to teaching veterinary endocrinology and providing other services to the department, university and community.

"I decided to pursue academia because I want to teach and mentor students to help them reach their full potential and love physiology and science as much as I do," Nichols said. "In addition, I want to conduct research in a university setting in order to better understand therapeutic targets to help people suffering from respiratory diseases and dysphagia as a result of motor neuron death."

Her research focuses on understanding how respiratory plasticity occurs and can be harnessed in models of respiratory motor neuron death and dysphagia including neurodegenerative diseases such as ALS.

In her short career, Nichols has already accumulated numerous accolades. She holds a Pathway to Independence grant from the National Institutes of Health's National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, and she just completed a prestigious Parker B. Francis Fellowship in pulmonary research.

Nichols also is the recipient of the 2015 Giles F. Filley Memorial Award for Excellence in Respiratory Physiology and Medicine. The award, presented annually to an individual demonstrating outstanding promise based on his or her research program in respiratory physiology and medicine, is one of the highest honors for an investigator in the field.

In her free time, Nichols enjoys reading, working out and running.

Joann Kunz, DVM, CVA

For Joann Kunz, DVM, CVA, joining the Department of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery in late 2014



represented a homecoming. She first came to the CVM as a Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine student completing her clinical year of study at MU. She said that was when she realized how valuable the college and its faculty would be to her career.

Once she completed her DVM, she joined the Community Practice Section at the MU Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital. Although she left two years later to work in private practice, she said she knew she would return to the CVM and teaching someday.

After more than seven years in private practice, Kunz is back as a clinical instructor of shelter medicine.

"I enjoy the unique challenges of this profession and value the relationships I have developed with my clients," Kunz said. "It is very special to care for their pets from puppy through the senior years. Now that I am back into teaching, I can pass all of these enjoyments along to my students as they grow from students into compassionate veterinarians."

During the shelter medicine rotation, a two-week required course for third- and fourth-year veterinary students, students receive hands-on spay and neuter training with animals from the Central Missouri Humane Society. They also learn about disease recognition in shelter medicine.

Kunz said she is excited to be part of the growing program.

"I really enjoy shelter medicine and getting involved with the community to work together to care for all the homeless animals in need," she said. "I think it's so important that students realize all the different ways veterinarians can help in this setting."

Kunz is certified in mixed animal acupuncture.

In her free time, she enjoys horseback riding with her husband and relaxing at home.

Pedro Melendez, DVM, MS, PhD

Pedro Melendez, DVM, MS, PhD, didn't plan on becoming a veterinarian. As a child growing up in Santiago, Chile, he dreamed of being a marine biologist.

However, his mother was injured in a car accident around the time when he would have left home to go to college. Choosing to help care for her, he stayed in his hometown and attended the University of Chile, which lacked a marine biology program. Melendez decided to study veterinary science instead.

The decision not to pursue his childhood passion could have left Melendez unhappy, but during an internship in his third year of university he discovered his fascination with cows. After completing his degree, he worked with dairy and beef cattle in private practice before joining the University of Chile food animal medicine faculty.

Melendez later moved to the United States to pursue a residency in food animal medicine at the University of Florida, where he received his MS and PhD. After serving as an assistant professor there and a professor at the University of Santo Tomas in Chile, Melendez recently joined the faculty of the Department of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery as an associate professor of food animal medicine and surgery.

Melendez, whose interests include dairy production medicine, lactation management and



metabolic diseases, plans to promote relationships between the CVM and his contacts in Chile and Argentina by helping students find externships there.

He admits he was terrified to speak in public when he was a student, but he has overcome those fears and loves the opportunity to teach students the lessons he has learned in his career, he said. He especially enjoys teaching students the importance of using scientific methods as clinicians, not just when doing research.

In his free time, Melendez enjoys playing tennis and volleyball and spending time with his wife, his 19-year-old twin sons, his 13-year-old daughter and their miniature schnauzer.

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