



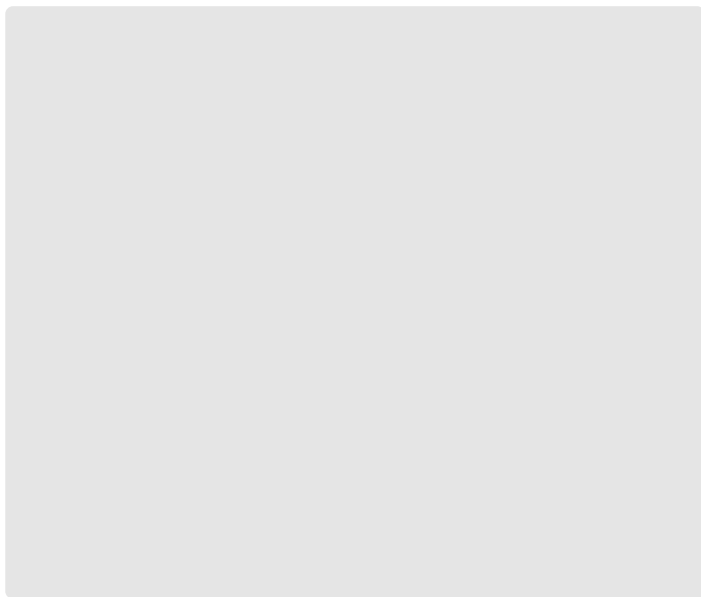
David Patterson, center, is currently helping guide students Jill Abel, left, and Brianne Bishop through the rigors of the MS/DVM program. Photo by Logan Jackson.

The (Academic) Road Less Traveled

Pair of students work on dual degrees through MS/DVM program

Written by [Stephen Schmidt](#) · October 22, 2015

For Jill Abel and Brianne Bishop, these days represent the quiet in the middle of the storm. This fall the two are taking nine credit hours in addition to serving as teaching assistants and conducting field trials related to their master's research as graduate students in the [Division of Animal Sciences](#) in the [College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources](#).



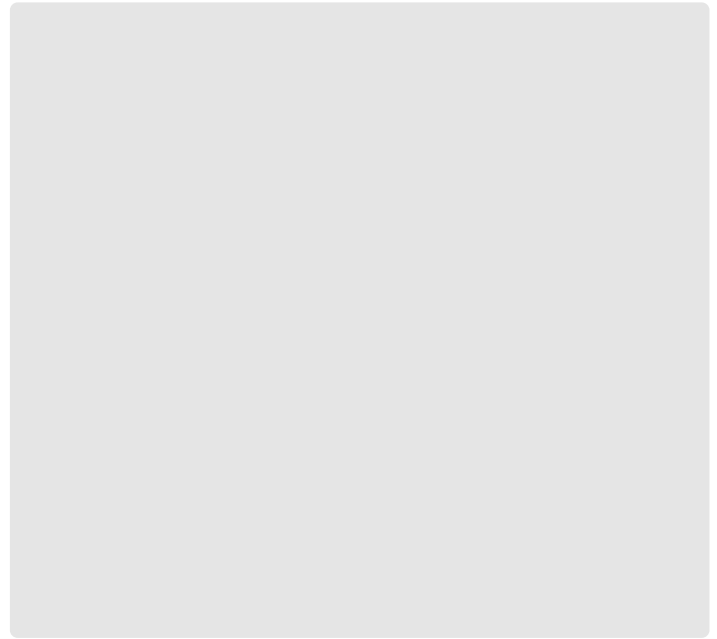
large-animal veterinary industry. Abel and Bishop are the first two students who have enrolled in this unique academic program at the same time.

“I think it’s great that the vet school and animal sciences can work together to help support us and that they recognize that this is an area of need,” Abel said. “And it’s been nice to have someone going through the program at the same time. We’ve been able to help each other out along the way.”

Cameron Locke, who completed his undergraduate degree in animal sciences earlier this year, became the fifth student to enter the program when he began this fall.

Twice the interest

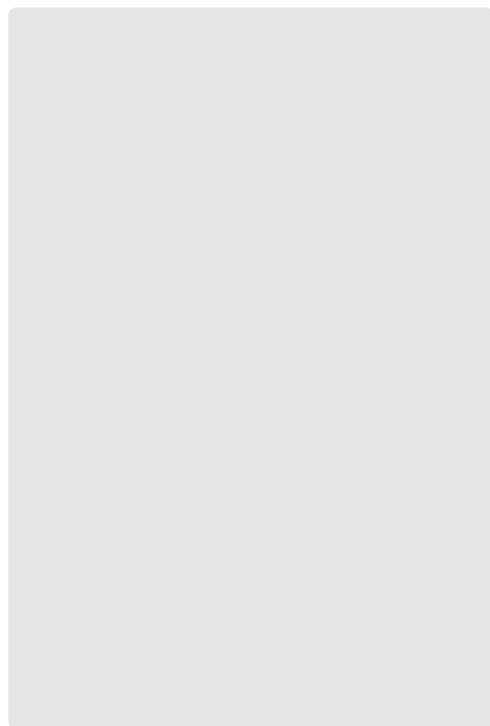
After beginning the program in the fall of 2013, the duo is currently on a hiatus from veterinary classes that will last from Jan. 1, 2015, to Jan. 1, 2016, as part of the arrangement for the program. During the break, Abel and Bishop are in the process of



Abel, on the other hand, did not start entertaining the notion of pursuing dual degrees until after she completed the F.B. Miller Internship in reproduction in the spring semester of her senior year (both students finished the same program in May 2013). During the experience, Abel and Bishop were trained how to artificially inseminate cattle on ranches in Missouri, Indiana and South Dakota.

“What really, as far as I’m concerned, sparks the interest in students accepted into the College of Veterinary Medicine to then pursue a graduate degree in reproductive physiology, is the internship in reproduction,” Patterson said. “When they have a chance to participate in the internship, their experience is very hands-on and, in many cases, students don’t realize they have that interest until they get involved with it. Once they do, it creates a situation where they want to learn more.”

Having two students wanting to pursue dual programs at the same time created an unprecedented situation. Patterson went to [Dr. John Dodam](#), who chairs the Department



can we change our curriculum. Whenever I talk to folks in industry, in government, I say ‘Rather than us creating a product and then trying to convince you that it’s what you need,’ we want to come to you and say ‘What skills would you like our students to have?’ so they can hit the ground running, and that’s kind of the tact that we’ve taken for the past five years.”

Henry added that the veterinary industry as a whole is in a place that needs to consider training students for new jobs — and focusing on areas that generate a good return on investment such as artificial insemination, ultrasound, embryo transfer and other reproductive specialties, given the high amount of debt that the average veterinary student faces upon graduation.

“It’s generally going to require something beyond the DVM degree and why not get it while you’re here and have all of the expertise available to you?” Henry said.

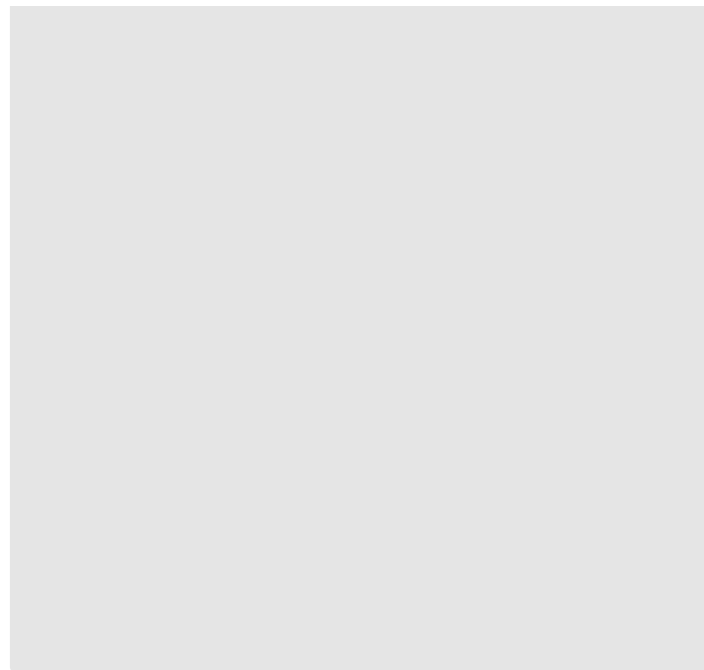
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Wilson was a little uncertain how his plan would fall on the ears of those in the room: “We weren’t sure how everybody would take it, but it came off really well. Everybody stepped up and helped me out.”

“Everybody was in agreement that it was a good idea to pursue this program and it went pretty smoothly,” Dodam remembered about that meeting. “The individuals who were involved in that initial planning for those graduate degrees worked very well together and allowed us to get the program initiated.”

As a student. Wilson had envisioned





pick-up truck since starting his practice, which currently is about 90 percent beef cattle and 10 percent dairy.

Often working seven days a week and putting an average of 70,000 miles a year on the road, he has built relationships with close to 50 steady clients throughout the state. Wilson heavily relies on his wife, Andrea, who graduated with an animal sciences degree in 2010 under her maiden name of Bartlebaugh. “I would say I run around crazy and she keeps me organized,” Wilson said.

When Wilson first started out, he never imagined that AI would be such a large part of his business. Now, he performs the service on about 5,000 head of cattle in Missouri each year. “That is a service that producers really want the veterinarian to be a part of,” he said. “It’s an added thing and you are already there doing the pregnancy checks and those type of things. It just works nicely with a practice.”



John Dodam

expansion either to other animal sciences specialties away from reproductive physiology, such as genomics, metagenomics and nutrition — to even the possible formation of a program involving dual doctorate degrees.

“We are getting more students who do realize the value of this type of program,” Dodam said. “The program is only limited by the number of students who are interested in pursuing that graduate program and the number of mentors who are willing to mentor.”

Added Henry: “I think this is a flexible enough of a program where we can modulate it by how the market is turning from year to year.”

prepare yourself for that,” Wilson said.

It’s a decision that requires some due diligence and self-reflection.

“When you begin thinking about a dual-degree program, talk to people who have already done it and ask questions,” Abel said. “The MS/DVM program is a big commitment, but it’s totally worth it, if it’s what you choose to pursue.”

One Comment



Shirley Elwing

October 26th, 2015

This is an unrivaled program and really great opportunity for these students. My daughter graduated from Vet school @ Mizzou and has done very well. I expect with this enhanced program we will be amazed with the results of Brianne's opportunity.



Comment



