

- [About the College](#)
- [Departments](#)
- [Teaching & Research](#)
- [Giving to Vet Med](#)
- [Veterinary Health Center](#)
- [Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory \(VMDL\)](#)
- [CVM Employment](#)
- [Zalk Veterinary Medical Library](#)
- [CVM Course Materials](#)
- [MyZou](#)
- [Home](#)

NEWS & EVENTS

CVM Introduces "The World's Newest Veterinarians" at 2017 Graduation

MU's College of Veterinary Medicine graduated its 68th class – 112 newly minted veterinarians – during the college's 2017 Academic Convocation on Friday, May 12, at Jesse Auditorium.

The occasion was more celebratory than solemn, with frequent interjections of humor by Dean Neil Olson, keynote speaker Ron Cott, and Tim DeValle, who gave the response on behalf of the graduating class.

Olson, DVM, PhD, highlighted students' activities and accomplishments outside of their rigorous academic and clinical requirements.

"During their four years in veterinary school, our students have given college tours, visited nursing homes, displayed mules, collected supplies for animal shelters, and educated the public about birds of prey and conservation," Olson observed. "They have helped to put on an annual open house that showcases the college and profession to the public. And during their clinical training, they have served as the interface between our college and animal owners. They have done all of these things while simultaneously learning the science and clinical medicine necessary to become world-class veterinarians."

Olson also saluted "the parents, grandparents, spouses, partners, children, mentors, friends and faculty for providing the love, support and educational network needed for the graduates to realize



MU CVM students stop for a selfie before the start of graduation ceremonies May 12, 2017.



The MU College of Veterinary Medicine Class of 2017 prepares to take the Veterinarian's Oath.

their ambition of becoming doctors of veterinary medicine."

Two of those parents, Don and Sylvia Spain, traveled from South Royalton, Vermont, to watch their daughter, Heather, receive her DVM. "I never thought I'd see her with 'Dr.' in front of her name," Don Spain said. "Since she was a little girl, she always said she was going to be a veterinarian, but I never put much stock in it then. But, now, she's done it. We are so proud of her."

Heather Spain said she will begin a small animal medicine and surgery rotating internship in June in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. "I'm interested in pursuing a residency program after that," she said. "I'm interested in internal medicine and emergency and critical care, but I haven't decided which one I'll pursue a residency in yet."

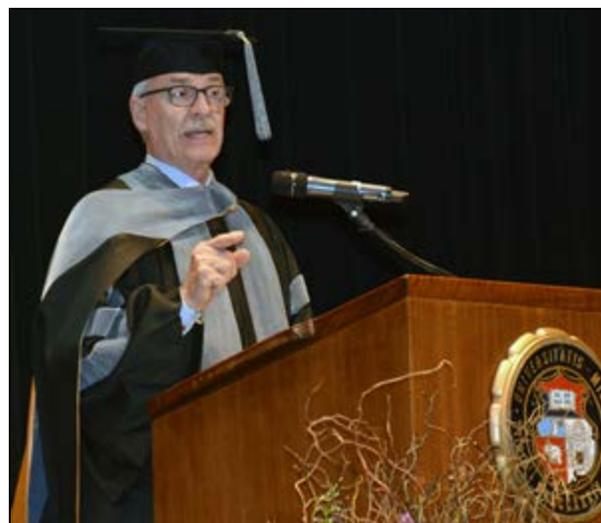
Keynote speaker Cott, DVM, retired as associate dean for Student and Alumni Affairs and executive director of Advancement for the CVM. He has been honored as the Missouri Veterinary Medical Association Veterinarian of the Year, the Robert E. Hertzog Leadership Award recipient, CVM Alumnus of the Year, and a recipient of the university's Gold Chalk Award and Excellence in Education Award. He also has a reputation as a storyteller.

Cott's remarks consisted mainly of two stories and two parables, which were met with laughter and applause. Cott emphasized to the graduates that, after four years of focusing on all things animal, their success as veterinarians depends greatly on people skills.

"During the 15 years I was the associate dean, not once did a prospective employer call and say, 'Ron, I need to hire a new veterinarian. I want a top student that can palpate X number of cattle per hour, spay a dog in five minutes, or diagnose lameness by listening to a horse's gait.' What they did say was, 'Ron, I want a new graduate who is a team player, can work with my staff, and can communicate with my clients,'" Cott related. "You are hearing it once again — it is critical to be well-trained as a veterinarian and



Clifford Miller, DVM, president of the Missouri Veterinary Medical Association and a member of the CVM Class of 2000, administered the Veterinarian's Oath to the new graduates.



Ron Cott, DVM, a member of the MU CVM Class of 1973 and recently retired as associate dean for Student and Alumni Affairs and executive director of Advancement for the CVM, offered the keynote address.



Timothy DeValle heads to the podium to offer the response on behalf of the CVM Class of 2017.

you are! But, tomorrow you will have to share that knowledge in a thoughtful and thorough way, to have your teammates and your clients trust you."

After recognizing the interns and residents who are completing specialty training at the CVM, Olson announced he was going "to go off script in a way we've never done" because "there is one individual here today whom we have decided to honor in a special way." Professor Emeritus William Fales, PhD, MS, is a bacteriologist by trade. He is the only non-veterinarian inducted to the MVMA Honor Roll, the only non-DVM to be an active voting member of the MVMA, and an honorary member in the Missouri Academy of Veterinary Practice. In recognition of his 40 years of service to the CVM and the veterinary industry, Olson named Fales the first Honorary Veterinarian in the college's history. Fales' daughter, Amanda Fales-Williams, DVM, assisted with his honorary hooding ceremony.

Clifford Miller, DVM, president of the Missouri Veterinary Medical Association and a member of the CVM class of 2000, administered the Veterinarian's Oath to the new graduates. Then, Associate Dean for Student Affairs Angela Tennison, DVM, announced the name of each graduate, who crossed the stage to receive the distinctive black and gray hood that signifies completion of the doctor of veterinary medicine degree requirements.

Dean Olson — assisted by Fales, Vice President of University Relations Steve Knorr, and Interim Chancellor and Provost Garnett Stokes — distributed diplomas to the graduates.

Graduates were hooded by Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Linda Berent, DVM, PhD, and Timothy Evans, associate professor in veterinary pathobiology. Evans, DVM, MS, PhD — known for his Hawaiian shirts and effervescent enthusiasm — was selected by students to assist in the hooding ceremony.

Timothy DeValle was chosen by his classmates to speak for the class of 2017. "Alright, pipe down, you animals," DeValle began. "I took a look at the schedule and saw those words, 'Dr. DeValle, student response,' and thought, 'Alright, I'm off the hook! They found some doctor guy with the same last name to give this speech. I sure hope he's smarter and better looking than I am!' Then, it hit me: 'Wait a minute, I AM Dr. DeValle!'"

Stokes, representing the Board of Curators, conferred degrees to the class, and Olson advised the graduates they could "move your tassel from the right side of your hat to the left, to indicate that your degree has been conferred," as he announced "the world's newest veterinarians" to the crowded auditorium.

Since its first graduating class in 1950, the CVM has produced nearly 4,000 doctors of veterinary medicine.

A photo gallery from the graduation ceremony can be found on the CVM [Facebook](#) page.

[Return to News and Events home](#)

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