

**Women's Veterinary Leadership Development Initiative (WVLDI)  
Report to the AVMA Board of Directors  
April 2015**

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**Women's Veterinary**  
Leadership Development Initiative

## Executive Summary

The WVLDI's momentum continues to grow. From conference presentations, to student chapters, to encouraging participation in the AVMA and other aspects of organized veterinary medicine, the WVLDI continues to fill a niche within our profession. Leaders, supporters, and volunteers with the Initiative encourage personal and professional growth of all veterinarians with the vision of developing *leaders for the benefit of the profession and to deliver on the promise of veterinary medicine to society*.

In brief, during the first four months of 2015, members and supporters of the WVLDI have given presentations at the AVMA Veterinary Leadership Conference (VLC), North American Veterinary Conference (NAVC), Western Veterinary Conference (WVC), Student American Veterinary Medical Association (SAVMA) Symposium, and the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC). Student chapters continue to be very active, with Cornell's student chapter receiving a major award. The Initiative also continues to support applicants for various AVMA entity and leadership program positions.

During the remaining months of 2015, the WVLDI is looking forward to multiple events to be held at several veterinary schools. Additionally, we have a strong program, including participation in AVMA sponsored events, planned for the AVMA Convention in Boston.

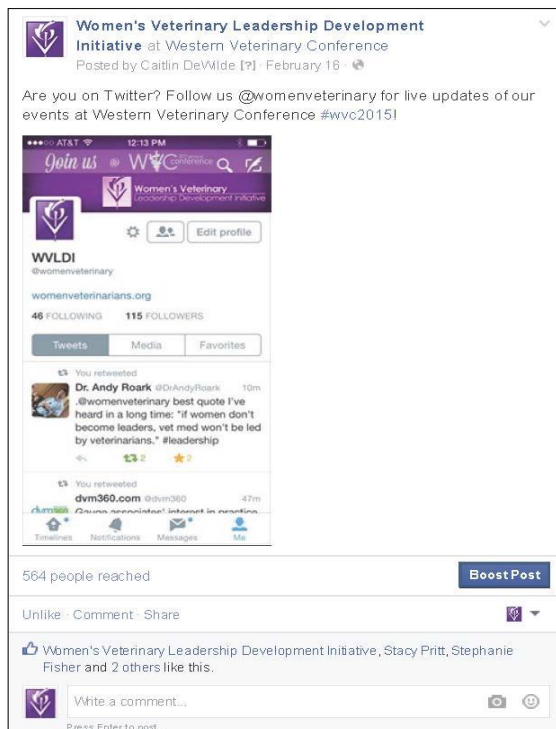
The WVLDI Board Members, supporters, volunteers, students, and others with a vested interest in the advancement of veterinary medicine deeply appreciate the AVMA's financial support of our efforts. Several of you have already heard from veterinarians and veterinary students about how important our activities and our message are. This report highlights our most exciting activities, so far, for 2015.

## Social Media

The WVLDI has had a busy start to 2015. Our social media reach has increased with the assistance from friends of the WVLDI, including the *Social DVM*, Dr. Caitlin DeWilde. Dr. DeWilde is also a member of the current (2014-2015) AVMA Future Leaders class. This monumental support is amplifying the reach of the WVLDI to:

- 160 Twitter followers.
- 1,181 Facebook members and 627 fans.
- LinkedIn expansion to 606 members.

Audience members at the WVC were particularly active, and the Twitter feed and Facebook posts (examples illustrated below) reflected this engagement.



## **WVLDI at the AVMA Veterinary Leadership Conference (January) and the Western Veterinary Conference (February)**

**AVMA Veterinary Leadership Conference (VLC)** - At the AVMA VLC, the WVLDI held two 90-minute sessions on the importance of diversity in VMA leadership. Presenters included Drs. René Carlson, Stacy Pritt, Lori Teller, Douglas Aspros, Karen Bradley, and Eva Evans. The title and description of these two presentations follow:

*Gender and Generational Diversity in your VMA Governance: why it is important to engage women and early career veterinarians in your association leadership*

Studies show that more diverse boards are more successful and we will discuss ways you can improve your association and increase member participation. Learn to recognize the fundamental differences between male and female communication and leadership styles as well as the keys to successfully balancing both leadership styles in decision-making roles will be highlighted. Presented by several female and male veterinarians who have forged pathways to leadership in our VMAs from the local and national organized veterinary medicine arenas, these veterinarians found value in serving their associations and can share the challenges they see for the next generation of veterinarians to follow in their footsteps.

Attendance was high at both presentations, with the audiences reflecting a good mix of men and women. Discussions were very insightful, and excellent networking connections were made.

**Western Veterinary Conference (WVC)** - Because of the support of the AVMA, the WVLDI was able to have a significant presence and impact at the WVC. Additionally, the WVLDI received affiliate status and free registration for all presenters, reflecting the strong support of the WVC for the Initiative.

The WVLDI presented a day-long program consisting of eight 1-hour sessions. Attendance for the sessions varied throughout the day from 30 to 90 people. Those sessions that focused on work-life balance, gaining confidence in leadership, biases, and practice ownership were the most heavily attended. Audience demographics also varied throughout the day, with more male than female attendees noted in the work-life balance presentation. Drs. Douglas Aspros, Lori Teller, Stacy Pritt, Bridget Heilsberg, Eva Evans, and Karen Bradley represented the WVLDI Board in the presentations. All presentations acknowledged the AVMA as a foundational supporter and the AVMA BOD as forward-thinking advocates for the Initiative and its mission. AVMA programs for leadership were highlighted particularly in the leadership opportunities presentation. These programs included the AVMA:

- Future Leaders.
- Early Career Development Committee (ECDC).
- Early Career Online Committee (ECOC).
- Veterinary Leadership Conference (VLC).
- Career Coaching and the Veterinary Career Center (VCC).

Opportunities within the SAVMA leadership were also highlighted for the students in the audience. There was a pervasive emphasis on involvement in local, state, allied, and national VMA activity throughout all presentations. The revised AVMA mission statement was also highlighted, with “lead the profession” being a key component for the future.

Programming at the WVC is summarized in the following session descriptions:

*Women Veterinarians as Owners.* As the veterinary profession becomes more female, there is a need for women to purchase veterinary practices and chart a course for practice ownership. This can be a daunting task for anyone, not to mention a woman professional juggling other work-life balance issues. The session will explore creative ways to foster interest in practice ownership and planning to become practice owners. Changing management and leadership ideas with female ownership will also be discussed, along with the reviewing tips for success. Speaker: Dr. Karen Bradley

*Women as Leaders: Expectations and Biases.* Today’s workplace has established a set of expectation for female leaders. The performance of women in leadership positions is based, both consciously and unconsciously, on these expectations. When the expectations are not met, the stage is set for concerns with female leadership. This session will explore the expectations and biases towards women leaders and how this factors into the lack of women leaders in the veterinary profession. Self-awareness of such biases will be promoted and strategies to overcome societal expectations will be fostered. Speaker: Dr. Stacy Pritt

*Finding Confidence as a Leader.* This presentation will focus on finding your inner confidence and making the most of it in your career setting. As a veterinarian and a leader, you must make decisions and recommendations to clients and staff constantly—how do you do this with confidence when you feel uncertain? This session will focus on recognizing female tendencies toward self-doubt and will provide tips on overcoming these tendencies. Brief discussions of the Impostor Syndrome and Confidence Gap topics in the broad media will be presented as well. Speakers: Drs. Karen Bradley and Lori Teller

*Women as Leaders: Real Life Examples (Roundtable).* In this highly interactive session, meet and talk to female leaders within the veterinary profession. Learn about their experiences and how they overcome biases to achieve success and sponsor other female leaders. Participants: Drs. Karen Bradley, Stacy Pritt, Lori Teller, Bridget Heilsberg, Eva Evans

*Support for Female Leadership in the Veterinary Profession (Two 1-Hour Sessions).* With that majority of the profession being female, why should veterinarians, male and female alike, support a larger role for female leaders? In the face of overwhelming data, why does our predominantly female profession struggle to place women in top leadership positions? And, why should men care? This session will focus on answering these questions, and more, as it focuses on the reasons behind and need for expanding the

presence of female veterinary leaders. Speakers: Drs. Karen Bradley, Lori Teller, and Doug Aspros.

*Support for Young Leaders in the Veterinary Profession.* Should you support the next generation as it gains important leadership skills? Why are specially designed leadership and mentorship programs for veterinary students and new graduates needed now when they were not needed before? What is the concept of sponsorship and why is it needed? This session will focus on why the next generation of veterinarians will be trained as leaders differently than previous generations. The session will also explore why it is important for younger veterinarians to have a voice now in leadership, rather than “waiting for their time.” Speakers: Drs. Stacy Pritt and Bridget Heilsberg

*Work-Life Choices as a Leader.* Balancing and blending a professional career, personal interests, and family responsibilities is difficult. Making the choice to add leadership roles into the mix can lead to either fulfillment or stress. Learn how to make the appropriate choices for your career and leverage your skill sets to find the volunteer and leadership positions that will add a sense of professional achievement accomplishment to your life. Speaker: Drs. Karen Bradley and Lori Teller

Following the WVC presentations, the WVLDI sent a survey to the attendees to solicit comments and feedback. This comment is an example of the feedback we’ve been receiving:

*I would have to say that I did perceive there to be a significant imbalance of the male to female ratio in leadership roles within our profession with males outnumbering females. I was very pleased to hear from and meet so many female veterinarians in these presentations that are actively pursuing and/or holding leadership positions in the veterinary profession and advocating for other female veterinarians to do the same! I found the lecturers in these presentations to be inspiring and am delighted to have met such excellent role models for other females in this profession.*

On the Tuesday of the WVC, WVLDI Board members Dr. Don Smith and Ms. Julie Kumble presented a two-hour version of their highly successful workshop on leadership. With a focus on the unique challenges faced by women looking to progress into leadership positions either in organized veterinary medicine or in the workplace, Dr. Smith and Ms. Kumble worked with participants to develop action plans that they could then immediately incorporate into their professional lives to help with their personal and career advancement. These workshops cover topics such as mentoring and negotiation skills, and they continue to be very popular at US veterinary schools and national meetings. The establishment of several new WVLDI student chapters has resulted from these workshops.

Veterinary media representatives attended WVLDI presentations at the WVC, and the Initiative is developing collaborations with some of these representatives to increase the distribution of WVLDI’s leadership messages. For example, Drs. Bradley and Teller are currently working with DVM360 on an article about body language and communication in the workplace.

### **WVLDI at the SAVMA Symposium (March)**

At the SAVMA Symposium, Dr. Don Smith and Ms. Julie Kumble presented a four-hour workshop to a full house. This workshop's focus was to help student participants develop an action plan as they navigate leadership options as students and new graduates. Dr. Beth Sabin, AVMA Associate Director for International and Diversity Initiatives and a member of the WVLDI Board, participated in the final audience-interactive panel discussion that concluded this successful workshop.

The SAVMA Symposium organizers also asked the WVLDI to supply a motivational speaker for the large animal track on the topic of leadership. Dr. Julia Wilson, the Executive Director of the Minnesota Board of Veterinary Medicine, joined with the WVLDI to present two 1-hour sessions titled *Catalyze Your Growth from Overachiever to International Veterinary Leader* and *Play to Your Strengths and Work on Your Weaknesses*. Support and presentation materials were provided by the WVLDI.

## Student Chapters

One of the most exciting pieces of news the WVLDI has to share is the fact that the four officers of the Cornell Student Chapter of WVLDI won the prestigious Cook Award for 2015. This award is presented to Cornell faculty or students “who have made significant contributions to changing the climate for women at Cornell University.” This is the first time in the 19-year history of this award that veterinary students have received this honor. The photos below show these student leaders receiving the award earlier this year.



The WVLDI Student Chapter at Texas A&M is hosting a joint presentation, open to the entire veterinary student body, with Veterinary Students as One In Culture and Ethnicity (VOICE) on April 21 to discuss parenting choices and work-life balance. They have invited several veterinarians (both male and female) to participate in an audience-interactive panel discussion, including veterinarians from across all practice types, and those who have chosen to remain childless, dealt with infertility issues and adoption, and who have children with special needs. The focus of the presentation will be how people made the choices they did and how they balance work with those choices.

On April 23, the Student WVLDI Chapter at the Virginia Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine will be hosting Dr. Stacy Pritt, who will be speaking to the students on *Finding Confidence and Support as a Young Leader in Veterinary Medicine*. The entire veterinary student body will be invited to the event.



## **More to Come in 2015**

**Allied industry meetings** - Other industries closely aligned with veterinary medicine, such as laboratory animal science, have started including the WVLDI in conferences and meetings. For example, Dr. Stacy Pritt will be presenting on *Men and Women in Management & Leadership: Similarities and Differences* at the Laboratory Animal Management Association on April 15 in New Orleans. Dr. Sarah Allison, who became aware of the WVLDI at the 2015 AVMA VLC, has submitted a Topic Suggestion for the 2015 American Association of Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS) National Meeting for a session that would highlight AVMA and AAVMC programs along with the WVLDI.

**2015 AVMA Convention** - The WVLDI worked with the Practice Management and Professional Development Section Manager within the AVMA Convention Management and Program Committee (CMPC) to develop programming for the 2015 Convention. Two sessions focusing on *Career Transitions as a Leader* will be held as part of the regular convention continuing education program. The speakers will be Drs. Stacy Pritt, Rachel Cezar, Tina Tran (former AVMA Future Leader), and Anna Reddish (AVMA Assistant Director of Student Initiatives).

The WVLDI also submitted two Hot Topics suggestions that were both accepted:

- *The Impact of Parenthood on Your Career* by Drs. Eleanor Green, Rachel Cezar, Heath McNutt, and Lori Teller
- *The Imposter Syndrome: Shattering the Psychological Glass Ceiling in Your Career* by Drs. Karen Bradley and Doug Aspros

Additionally, two WVLDI board members (Drs. Stacy Pritt and Rachel Cezar) have been invited to participate in the 2105-2016 AVMA Future Leaders Program symposium on wellness on Monday morning of the AVMA Convention.

Our LinkedIn and Facebook pages have also been utilized to help recruit volunteers for the popular Ambassador Program for the AVMA Convention. The WVLDI will soon be working with the AVMA CMPC to discuss 2016 programming.

**Industry support** - Ceva Animal Health has again provided support for WVLDI in 2015, and Zoetis has recently reached out to the WVLDI Board to discuss support for our initiatives.

### **Continuing Leadership Development**

The WVLDI continues to recruit volunteers for a wide variety of volunteer opportunities. Our goal is to find volunteers who meet the needs of the organization and/or entity and have a passionate interest in organized veterinary medicine. We have supported the nominations of both men and women for multiple AVMA opportunities, including the VLC Scholarship Program, Veterinary Economic Strategy Committee (VESC), Early Career Development Committee, and the Future Leaders program.

Many WVLDI Board members and supporters also serve as official leadership mentors for current and past AVMA Future Leaders. WVLDI Board members help mentees with writing applications, constructing resumes, and navigating the path to leadership positions within the AVMA. Board members also make a considerable number of introductions, connecting veterinarians who seek leadership roles in organized veterinary medicine with decision makers and influencers that can help them in their leadership journeys.