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"One Health is the collaborative efforts of multiple disciplines working locally, nationally, and globally to attain optimal health for people, animals, plants and our environment."

"One Health implementation will help protect and/or save untold millions of lives in our generation and for those to come."

"Between animal and human medicine there are no dividing lines--nor should there be."
Rudolf Virchow, MD (the father of cellular pathology)

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Kansas State University: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Graduate Public Health Education (USA)

Michael B. Cates, DVM, MPH, DACVPM

The Master of Public Health Program at Kansas State University in Manhattan Kansas (USA) continues its innovative, interdisciplinary approach to graduate public health education. While a few other Master of Public Health programs in the United States are partially aligned with a College of Veterinary Medicine, K-State's program is housed in one. And, three other colleges on the campus, along with the Graduate School, are partners in the program, making it truly interdisciplinary.

Started in the fall semester of 2003, the Kansas State MPH Program was initiated as a collaboration of the Graduate School and the Colleges of Agriculture, Arts & Sciences, Human Ecology, and Veterinary Medicine, with the first interim director from Human Ecology, Carol Ann Holcomb, PhD. This innovative approach was both cost effective and efficient with its use of existing infrastructure, faculty and courses. Today, the college partners are still the same, and the program has its first full-time Director, *Michael B. Cates, DVM, MPH, DACVPM, also a Professor in the College of Veterinary Medicine. Brigadier General (Retired) Cates is the former Chief of the Army Veterinary Corps and the first veterinarian to serve as the Commanding General of the Army's main public health

organization, the Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine as well as the Surgeon General's primary senior executive on Preventive Medicine and Public Health.

The partnership, crossing traditional college boundaries at Kansas State University, has a definite advantage for students. There are over 55 different faculty members affiliated with the MPH Program, from 12 departments in five academic colleges. This variety of disciplines and research interests opens a wealth of possibilities for students, who can choose between four distinct areas of emphasis—Infectious Diseases and Zoonoses; Food Safety and Biosecurity; Public Health Nutrition; and Public Health Physical Activity. Dr. Cates noted “The faculty members here are extraordinary experts in many different areas which impact on animal, human and/or environmental health. You will probably not find such a unique blend anywhere else.”

That uniqueness and breadth has led to significant growth in enrollment. When Dr. Cates arrived in January 2009, the program had an enrollment of 26 students; today, there are over 90. One noticeable trait of the program is the high interest level of veterinarians, veterinary students and even pre-professional students to pursue the MPH degree or the Graduate Certificate in Public Health Core Concepts. Right now, over 40% of the program's students fit into one of those veterinary-related categories. Overall, the program has attracted outstanding domestic and international students from over 20 disciplines, including medicine, nursing, dentistry, human nutrition, kinesiology, animal science, food science and several others, from 23 states and territories and 13 other countries. Already, the 91 total Kansas State University MPH graduates are contributing to global health improvements around the world, in local, state, federal and international organizations, public and private.

The future looks bright for even more opportunities for students and graduates of this program, with the arrival of two major federal laboratories—the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility and the Arthropod Borne Animal Disease Research Unit / Center for Grain and Animal Health Research—and a continuing and growing culture of teamwork across the state. The program is exploring ways to collaborate with the University of Kansas' more traditional public health program and medical school, and the two universities already play active roles in the state's Public Health Systems Group, involving local and state governmental agencies along with foundations and other health-related stakeholders, and the Public Health Workforce Development Coordinating Council. In another example, Kansas State MPH faculty and students help in public health outreach, education and research with the university's One Health Kansas and Pathways to Public Health initiatives, aiming to raise awareness and interest in public health, starting with children in kindergarten, and ultimately to improve the numbers and quality of educated professionals in the public health workforce.

A crucial component of the tremendous growth of the K-State MPH Program is the interest, advocacy and support from the university's administrative leadership, particularly the college deans and the past and present university provosts and presidents. “Without the consistent and adequate support of the university and the college leaders, such an innovative interdisciplinary approach to education would not succeed,” Dr. Cates noted. “We are very fortunate here to have some leaders who are willing to fund non-traditional

approaches in a field where multidisciplinary methods really make the most sense. Prevention is the best way to health, and collaboration is key. Together, we must set a 'one health' example among all stakeholders, for improved community health throughout our state and beyond."

***Dr. Cates** is a recognized One Health leader and longstanding One Health supporter/advocate <http://www.onehealthinitiative.com/supporters.php>.

Note: In addition, The Dean of Kansas State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, **Ralph C. Richardson, DVM, Dipl ACVIM (Oncology, Internal Med)** is a recognized One Health leader and longstanding One Health supporter/advocate. Dr. Richardson also serves on the One Health Initiative Autonomous *pro bono* team's Honorary Advisory Board <http://www.onehealthinitiative.com/advBoard.php>.