

CREATING CONNECTIONS: OUTREACH ACROSS UCD VETERINARY COMMUNITY

UCD School of Veterinary Medicine has a strong focus on effective engagement with stakeholders. In this article, Dr Helen Graham, the School's communications manager, highlights some of the ways in which it connects with stakeholders across the UCD Veterinary Community

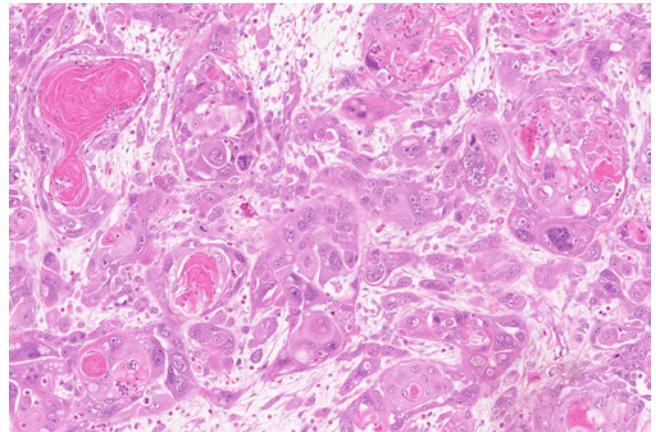
The School uses a number of different platforms to disseminate information on its activities to stakeholders, with a particular focus on keeping our alumni up to date on School news.

Newsletters

A quarterly electronic newsletter goes out to alumni and this communication is always very well received. The newsletter allows us to share news, updates and information on upcoming events with the wider community, and there is also a focus on research projects, publications, and conferences.

A recent addition to the newsletter is our 'Spotlight On' feature, which focuses on a different researcher in each edition. Our researchers describe the path leading to their current role in the School, their area of interest, what they enjoy most about their work, what they find most challenging and the best thing about working in the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine. First up in this series is Dr Sourav Bhattacharjee, Assistant Professor in our Veterinary Biosciences Section, who tells us about kite-flying in Kolkata, going to medical school and what brought him to the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine.

These articles are also featured on our website which has recently been updated to include a new 'Research' section, which is designed to make it as easy as possible for site visitors to access information and updates on research taking place in the School and to find out more about our researchers. The new section also includes information on undergraduate research and it will allow our community



Feline oral squamous cell carcinoma (FOSCC) is the focus of Alison Lee's PhD project.

to keep up to date on new research initiatives such as the Clinical Research Board.

UCD Veterinary Community News/Nuacht Phobal Tréidliachta UCD, the School's annual print newsletter has a wider circulation and covers stories and developments from across our community. Research features are central to this publication, with a particular focus in recent years on One Health initiatives such as UCD Squared which sees UCD partner with University of California, Davis on a range of research projects; this initiative is supported by Zoetis. In 2023, sustainability in research was a focus of the newsletter, and it also included a feature on the Irish Clinical Academic Training (ICAT) Programme. In this piece, Dr Alison Lee, the first Veterinary ICAT Fellow, spoke about why she decided to apply to the programme and also detailed her PhD project, which is in the early stages of development; Alison plans to focus her research on feline oral squamous cell carcinoma (FOSCC) and the influence of the oral microbiome on tumour development and progression.

Profiles

The School is also keen to connect with researchers and veterinary professionals beyond UCD and to highlight their work to our community. We regularly feature profile pieces in our Newsletter and on our website, such as Professors Peter and John Timoney, internationally recognised experts in infectious diseases. Based in the University of Kentucky for many years, John was Keeneland Chair of Infectious Diseases and Peter served as Director of the Maxwell H. Gluck Equine Research Center. Both are UCD Vet alumni. A UCD Alumni Relations initiative, Q & Alumni, recently featured internationally-renowned equine veterinarian



UCD Veterinary Community News/Nuacht Phobal Tréidliachta UCD, the Newsletter of the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine.



Professors Peter and John Timoney.



Professor David Freeman.

Professor David Freeman, Appleton Endowed Professor at the University of Florida. In this feature, David spoke about his time spent studying Veterinary Medicine at UCD and his memories of college life. He also discussed some of the more challenging aspects of veterinary medicine, the mentors who have helped him during his career, and he offered some useful advice for those starting out in the veterinary professions. The feature was shared across multiple central university platforms and across our own community channels.

Celebrating our community: alumni wall

An 'Alumni Wall' was installed in the UCD Veterinary Sciences Centre in 2022 to mark 20 years of the Vet School on the Belfield Campus. Featuring twenty of the most exceptional alumni from across the UCD Veterinary Community, this initiative has helped to highlight not just the achievements of our alumni, but also the varied career opportunities a veterinary qualification can offer. It has also been important in developing connections as the alumni featured were nominated by staff, students and graduates from across our community.

Alumni featured on the Wall include Ireland's Ambassador to China, Ann Derwin; All-Ireland winning Tyrone Gaelic footballer and co-manager Brian Dooher; 'Supervet' Noel Fitzpatrick; renowned racehorse trainers John Oxx and Dermot Weld; internationally recognised experts in infectious diseases John and Peter Timoney; and critically-acclaimed concertina player Brenda Castles.

UCD Festival

The annual UCD Festival offers the School a great opportunity to engage with alumni, the university community and the wider community. The UCD Festival is a unique multi-disciplinary showcase of UCD's innovation, creativity and research presented in a festival atmosphere, and it brings more than 18,000 visitors to campus each year. Staff and students in the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine organised several events to showcase our work to Festival attendees and we were delighted to see so many people come along to the Vet School to take part in these events and learn more about what we do.

Our 'Vet for a Day' event in the Veterinary Clinical Skills Centre, gave visitors a chance to meet our animal models and to see demonstrations of clinical skills techniques such as IV catheter placement, suturing, and blood collection. 'Skulls, Specimens & Slides - Exploring Veterinary Science' offered a range of interactive activities to Festival guests; they had the opportunity to learn how to use a microscope and identify specimens from our veterinary labs, and to find out how we test samples and what they can tell us about our pet's health. Visitors could also have a go at identifying skulls and specimens used in anatomy and pathology teaching.



A future veterinary scientist at the UCD Festival!

Alumni engagement: mentoring and the young alumni ambassadors group

Creating alumni connections is also a key focus of the School's engagement activities. Our alumni can participate in informal online mentoring of new graduates through the UCD Alumni Network. Online mentoring is flexible and can be initiated by new graduates at any time; the level of interaction and support is agreed by the mentor and mentee. Many of our alumni are actively involved in working with new and recent graduates on the UCD Alumni Network and we are always keen to welcome new mentors to the platform. Alumni can also engage with the School through our Young Alumni Ambassadors Group (YAAG). Set up last year, the YAAG is designed to foster interaction and communication between the School and its recent graduates through establishing a shared sense of community - cultivating and encouraging a continuing affiliation among young alumni and UCD. Four members of the YAAG presented at information sessions for prospective students in New York and San Francisco in January and the Group have also been invited to input into the School's strategic planning process.



An 'Alumni Wall' was installed in the UCD Veterinary Sciences Centre in 2022. Many of the featured alumni attended the launch event to mark the installation. Back row (l-r): Brian Dooher, Patricia Reilly; Professor Patrick Wall; Professor Mark Rogers (UCD Acting President); Professor Michael Doherty; Dr Des Rice; Dermot Weld; Mary Geary; and Dr Perpetua McNamee. Front row: (l-r) Hester McAllister; Dr Susie Mitchell; Brenda Castles; and Samantha Feighery.

School events: carol service & class reunions

One of the main events in our calendar each year is the Annual Carol Service, now heading into its 45th year. Taking place in late November each year, the Carol Service is a fantastic opportunity for the UCD Veterinary Community to come together to celebrate and reconnect with the School. This annual event showcases the abundant talent in the School, with staff and students making up the Vet Choir and Trad Group. The event also fundraises for two charities each year, with the Irish Cancer Society and the DSPCA benefitting from the 2023 event.

Class reunions are also a feature of our annual events calendar - reunions are a great way for alumni to reconnect with the Vet School. The UCD Veterinary Medicine Class of 2003 celebrated their 20-year reunion last October. There was lots of reminiscing and reconnecting over the weekend,



The Vet Choir at the 44th annual Carol Service.
Photo: Matthew Rose

with over 40 classmates travelling from locations as far afield as Portland, Oregon and Rochester, New York, as well as the UK and all over Ireland. It was a weekend which will be long remembered by all who attended.

Leslie Ann Jones organised the event, and when asked if she had any advice for fellow alumni who might be interested in organising a reunion, she said, 'Keep on top of everyone - they WANT to be there, but sometimes they just need a push. Also, please, everyone, keep the Alumni office current with your contact information - it makes these events a lot easier!'

Keep connected with the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine

Whether you'd like to receive the School alumni newsletter, learn about the latest research happening in the School or attend an event, if you'd like to stay connected with the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine, please get in touch with us: vetcommunications@ucd.ie

Thanks to Lola Cullen (UCD CHAS Alumni Relations Manager) and Valerie Andrews (CHAS Senior Administrator) for their assistance with this article.



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