

American College of Veterinary Microbiologists: Enhancement of Impact
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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to suggest ideas for the enhancement of the impact and mission of the American College of Veterinary Microbiology (ACVM). The ACVM Board of Governors understands that veterinary microbiology is of vital importance to human and animal health and that the college should be preeminent in developing, promoting and implementing the expertise of its membership for the benefit of society. These ideas are intended to serve as a starting point for developing an action plan.

Background

The ACVM is comprised of a broad spectrum of veterinary microbiologists who work in diagnostic laboratories, academia, government agencies, and animal and human health-related industries. ACVM diplomates serve in many capacities, including the following areas.

- Researchers - Investigation on multiple aspects of microbial pathogenesis and host immunity.
- Diagnosticians - Surveillance of animal, human and environmental health to provide the first indications of new emerging or re-emerging pathogens that affect multiple species.
- Educators - Instruction for veterinarians, physicians, animal scientists, and other biomedical scientists in microbial physiology, pathogenesis and ecology, as well as the physiology of host immunity, and the normal (and abnormal) mechanisms of the immune response.
- Administrators and leaders in the veterinary profession - Service to academia and government through leadership and oversight of veterinary education, and regulatory issues affecting animal and human health.
- Business directors and managers - Leadership in animal and human health industries that provide critical products for the diagnosis, therapy and prevention of microbial diseases.

Importance of accreditation and expansion of membership

The ACVM is a specialty college recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) to confer diplomate-status on individuals who have attained excellence in veterinary microbiology, immunology (and soon parasitology). Although veterinary microbiologists with diverse educational and experiential backgrounds attain board certification, one could argue that diplomate-status is of practical value primarily to clinical microbiologists as a verification of their competence to perform specific job functions.

To expand its membership and impact the ACVM needs to actively recruit individuals who might not otherwise seek accreditation. The college must convince potential members of the value-added aspects of diplomate-status, which include enhanced professional status and opportunities for personal and professional development. The ACVM will likely need to consider alternative or additional criteria for board certification. These must address the needs of an

expanded membership as well as maintain the requirements for AVMA recognition. Alternatives could include admission of significantly more “honorary” diplomates and/or re-evaluation of the criteria (including exams) required for board certification. The recruitment and inclusion of more international members should be a priority.

As a first step, the Board of Governors should poll all current diplomates to confirm that there is a consensus to increase membership, and by what percentage. A workshop should be convened, perhaps in conjunction with an annual CRWAD, AVMA, or other professional meeting to develop recommendations. Prior to this meeting, the Board of Governors should charge an *ad hoc* committee comprised of diplomates, members of the examination committee, distinguished honorary diplomates, and non-ACVM veterinary microbiologists to develop a report that includes specific new guidelines for diplomate-status with the intent to increase membership and diversity.

Promotion of the ACVM mission

Diplomates, who can effectively elucidate, communicate and promote the value of ACVM expertise should be identified by the Board of Governors and charged with carrying out the objectives listed below. The idea is to present the college as the acknowledged national and international center for animal infectious diseases and related fields. Federal agencies, animal industries, and professional organizations should recognize the importance and relevance of the expertise that resides in the ACVM membership.

- Meet with academic, industry and government leaders to explain the scope of expertise of ACVM members, proactively learn the specific needs of their respective organizations, and explore possible new partnerships.
- There is a need for ACVM to become involved with students at the DVM and post-graduate levels to promote veterinary microbiology because there is a looming critical shortage of qualified veterinary microbiologists. This could be accomplished through seminars and the establishment of student clubs with pro-active ACVM faculty members serving as role models. Cultivate the idea of initiating a national organization for graduate students seeking advanced degrees in veterinary microbiology. Promote the mission of the ACVM to faculty members and students at veterinary colleges and departments of veterinary science. A plan to enable students to begin meeting the certification/membership requirements while they are in their DVM or graduate programs should be considered.
- The Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges should be approached to serve as a partner in promoting the value of the ACVM with regard to academic veterinary training as well as research.
- Develop partnerships with professional groups outside the veterinary profession to explore ways that the ACVM and these groups might work together more synergistically. A specific suggestion is for the ACVM to establish a working relationship with Division Z (Animal Health Microbiology) of the American Society of Microbiologists.

- Identify ACVM members and others who are leaders in their respective fields and ask them to promote the value of ACVM through nominations of exceptionally qualified ACVM members in organizations such as National Academy of Sciences, AAAS fellows, and others.
- Create a concise and succinct mission statement that fits on a business card, letterhead or website heading and immediately conveys to anyone who reads it (layperson, veterinarian, or microbiologist) the essence of the ACVM (e.g., “*Veterinary Microbiologists in Service to Society through Science*”).

Implementation of ACVM expertise

There are a number of ways that the ACVM could more effectively implement the expertise of its membership for the benefit of the profession and society as a whole. As a start, working committees could be appointed and charged to work on the following areas.

- Develop guidelines for design and operation of BSL3, ABSL3 and BSL3-Ag facilities.
- Provide content of coursework in basic and applied microbiology courses required for AVMA-accreditation of veterinary professional curricula
- Present NIH and NIFA with a prioritized list of diseases for which funding is necessary including specific zoonotic infectious diseases, diseases affecting production animal and companion animal health, food-borne infectious diseases.
- Develop guidelines for surveillance and control of emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases.
- Identify the relevant expertise and availability of diplomates to prepare monographs and manuals of general and specific use to the profession (e.g. BSL3 certification and operation manuals). This can be done with input from academia, government and the private sector.

Additional Suggestions

The following objectives are suggested as ways to enhance the “value-added” aspects of ACVM membership.

- Hire professional staff to handle book-keeping and administrative activities.
- Partner with a journal to publish research conducted by ACVM diplomates.
- Provide active list-serves and blogs to enhance networking opportunities.
- Commission the publication of monographs and manuals of general and specific use to the profession (e.g. BSL3 certification and operation manuals).
- Facilitate development of multi-investigator research grant proposals among members.

Action Items

- Distribute this document for review by ACVM Board of Governors
- If document is approved by the BOG, circulate to all ACVM diplomates for vote to accept or reject its recommendations.
- If document is approved by the ACVM membership, appoint an *ad hoc* committee to prioritize and implement recommendations