Culminating a seven-year plan, The Texas A&M University System today announced partnerships to expand veterinary education, research and undergraduate outreach into several regions of the state through four A&M System universities.

The partnerships are between the Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences (CVM) and West Texas A&M University, Prairie View A&M University, Texas A&M University-Kingsville and Tarleton State University.

In 2009, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board reported there was no need for a second veterinary school but that CVM could increase enrollment to meet future state needs. The study (http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/reports/pdf/1701.pdf) focused on the need to increase the number of underrepresented minorities entering the profession as well as enlarging the pipeline of rural-based veterinarians to better serve the livestock industry as well as deer and wildlife interests.

In response, the Texas A&M System began beefing up its agriculture programs at the four universities while planning a state-of-the-art veterinary teaching complex at College Station. With no state appropriation available for construction during the recession, Texas A&M invested $120 million from the Permanent University Fund.

The teaching complex, which opens this fall, allows CVM to accept more veterinary students and create the partnerships to encourage more underrepresented minorities and rural students, who are more likely to return to their home regions, to work as veterinarians in the state’s agricultural economy.

“Texas agriculture feeds and clothes the country,” said Chancellor John Sharp. “We will always need small-animal veterinarians to take care of our pets, but we also need more large-animal veterinarians helping to protect our state’s agricultural economy.”
All four of the A&M System universities have significant underrepresented minority student populations as well as unique animal science programs and ties to the livestock or wildlife industries in their regions:

- West Texas A&M operates its own feedlot in the Panhandle, a region that feeds a third of the nation’s beef and boasts expanding dairy and swine industries. The Beef Carcass Research Center and the Nance Ranch Teaching and Research Facility are located there.

- Tarleton State operates the state’s only university-based dairy as a public-private partnership and collaborates regularly with the dairy cattle industry. The university also has a Veterinary Technology program.

- Prairie View A&M’s International Goat Research Center, with more than 1,000 dairy and meat goats, is one of the largest, oldest goat research programs in the nation. It specializes in the areas of genetics, reproductive physiology, nutrition and veterinary health.

- Texas A&M-Kingsville’s Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute is the leading wildlife research organization in Texas. It also has a Veterinary Technology program with a new state-of-the-art facility.

“This is a wonderful development for students from the veterinary technology program at Texas A&M-Kingsville,” Dr. Steven Tallant, President of Texas A&M University-Kingsville, said. “It will provide opportunities for collaboration with their peers around the A&M System and as well as the preparation necessary for veterinary school. It is a win-win situation for our students, the A&M System, and the state of Texas.”

Opening the new CVM teaching complex is key to extending the reach of veterinary education and research beyond College Station. While the state’s population has boomed, the size of the veterinary school remained virtually flat due to older, cramped facilities. The new facility will allow the CVM to meet the need for both the veterinary and livestock industries as the demand for veterinarians grows.

The new education complex will easily accommodate an initial increased class size of 20 to 30 new veterinary students each year. By providing new learning opportunities for students who attend the four A&M System universities, the CVM hopes to increase the number of applicants from those regions.

Toward that goal, the CVM intends to hire veterinary faculty initially to teach undergraduate courses, strengthen the curriculum and explore research partnerships with industry in each region. Eventually, as demand increases, the CVM will evaluate the need to offer some veterinary courses at sites other than College Station.

The CVM is in the process of hiring two faculty members to teach and conduct research at West Texas A&M. It also will be seeking appropriations to duplicate those efforts at Tarleton State, Prairie View A&M and Texas A&M-Kingsville.

This cost-effective, graduated approach to expanding veterinary education leverages the state’s assets to their highest and best use while being mindful of Texas taxpayers and following the guidance of the Coordinating Board study.

“The Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences has served animal owners in Texas and beyond for 100 years,” said Dr. Eleanor M. Green, the Carl B. King dean of veterinary medicine. “We intend to expand our ability to respond to the needs of our diverse populations and to the needs of the veterinary profession by
linking the vast strengths of Texas A&M across the state. This program puts boots on the ground where they are needed, as they are needed.”

About the Texas A&M University System  The Texas A&M University System is one of the largest systems of higher education in the nation, with a budget of $4.2 billion. Through a statewide network of 11 universities, seven state agencies, two service units and a comprehensive health science center, the A&M System educates more than 140,000 students and makes more than 22 million additional educational contacts through service and outreach programs each year. System-wide, externally funded research expenditures exceed $932 million and help drive the state’s economy. About Texas A&M University Texas A&M University – the flagship campus of The Texas A&M University System – is a tier one research institution. Committed to the values of its land-grant heritage, Texas A&M ensures accessible education for the people of Texas and the world. Its faculty-led research advances innovation for society’s challenges, and yields over $854 million in annual expenditures. Texas A&M is developing educated leaders of character dedicated to serving the greater good. About the College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences Established in 1916, the Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences is one of only 30 Colleges of Veterinary Medicine in the United States. The College has graduated more than 7,600 veterinarians since it was created. Today the College has over 500 DVM students, another 2,300 undergraduate students in the biomedical sciences program and 170 graduate students involved in research. Among veterinary colleges, Texas A&M is ranked third in the nation and sixth in the world.

Contact Information:
Megan Palsa Executive Director of Communications
College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences mpalsa@cvm.tamu.edu 979-862-4216 979-421-3121 (cell)

Terry McDevitt Vice Chancellor for Marketing and Communications The Texas A&M University System tmcdevitt@tamus.edu 979-458-6018 210-232-5759 (cell)

Additional Quotes
“This initiative is ultimately about service to our state. It extends the reach of our highly-ranked College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences while also putting the prospect of a veterinary education on the radar of more students throughout Texas.”

_Michael Young, President_

_Texas A&M University_

“From our roots as an agricultural college, Tarleton has provided educational programs in animal health for many years. We operate the only university dairy in the state and have one of only two four-year Vet Tech programs in Texas. Over the past 10 years, we ranked in the top three among universities sending students to the Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine. We are pleased to participate in this unique partnership that will help even more students reach their dream of becoming veterinarians.”

_F. Dominic Dottavio, President_

_Tarleton State University_

"We are thrilled that Texas A&M has created this pipeline for more students to study Veterinary Medicine in the State of Texas. Agriculture education is vital to the success of every community and a cornerstone of Prairie View A&M University. We are proud that "Prairie View" will be able to provide even more opportunities to our students,"
faculty, and community through this partnership with Texas A&M University. We remain committed to our land-grant mission as well as our proud tradition of service, research and teaching in this critical area."

George C. Wright, President Prairie View A&M University

“The partnership with the Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine is a unique opportunity for our students, our faculty and our region. The Texas Panhandle is well known for its beef, equine and swine industries and, hence, provides the perfect location for a hands-on educational experience for students, for research and for outreach. We are pleased to be part of this venture and look forward to what it can do for WT and the livestock industry in the Texas Panhandle and Texas."

J. Patrick O’Brien, President West Texas A&M University

For More Information, Contact: Office of Marketing and Communications MSC 114
700 University Blvd., Kingsville, TX 78363-8202 University Switchboard: 361.593.2111
Email: marcomm@tamuk.edu