

Texas A & M University - One Health Student Association

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COLLEGE STATION - For the first time, Texas A&M is teaming up students across many disciplines to tackle health care issues around the world.

The One Health initiative at Texas A&M came from the belief that it takes a team to solve society's problems.

A tragic situation helped Ashton Richardson find his calling in life. "I'm from New Orleans and I was relocated during Hurricane Katrina," Richardson, a first-year Veterinary student, said. "During that time, being away from friends and having a hectic home life, animals were kind of my refuge. He is not only a first-year veterinary student at Texas A&M, he's the president of the Student One Health Association -- a new initiative on campus, but not a new concept. "It dates all the way back to hypocrites, he was the first person to suggest the health of your environment dictates the health of the animals and the people within that environment," Richardson said.

One health was born from the idea that human health, animal health, and environmental health are all interconnected. "If we can unravel the mystery in animals, and if we can treat animals, then all of those findings can be transferred to people and quite frankly, vice versa," Eleanor Green, Dean of Veterinary Medicine, said. And finding solutions to health care issues also requires collaboration across disciplines. "It has economics, it has policy issues that have to do with regulations, it has to do with the environment in which you live in," Mike Chaddock, asst. dean, one health & strategic initiatives, said.

A&M hopes to be at the forefront of a one health approach to learning in universities. "We've worked as a team and put together 23 research proposals for One Health," Chaddock said. Currently plans are in the works to offer a One Health certificate. "It will be twelve credits in One Health, interdisciplinary in One Health,"

After graduation, Ashton has a heart to serve developing nations where people often contract diseases from animals roaming wild. "Well if that person is going to a health care clinic to receive treatment, it only makes sense that you would also treat the animal who could also transmit pathogens to that person," Richardson said. And said the connection between human and animal health is the both the past and future of health care.

They hope to offer the One Health certificate program by next year.