

VIRGINIA-MARYLAND COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

DVM Commencement Ceremony

May 15, 2026

Welcome

Dr. M. Daniel Givens, Dean

Commencement Speaker

Dr. Roger Ramirez Barrios

Executive Director for DVM Enrollment and Student Services

Richard B. Talbot Award

Valedictorian, Class of 2026

Dr. Mia Damiano

Recognition of Graduates and Hooding Ceremony

Dr. Sunshine Lahmers, Associate Dean, Professional Programs

Dr. Xiaoping Zhu, Associate Dean, Maryland Campus

Dr. Roger Ramirez Barrios, Executive Director
for DVM Enrollment and Student Services

Dr. Kurt Zimmerman, Zoetis Distinguished Teacher Award

Dr. Jennifer Davis, 2026 Outstanding Instructor Award

Dr. Garry Morgan, Interim Director of Student Services

Ms. Jessica Black, Director of Student Success

Veterinarian's Oath

Dr. Jennifer Goessling, President

Maryland Veterinary Medical Association

Welcome to the Profession

Dr. Sherri Gard, President

Virginia Veterinary Medical Association

Class Address

Dr. Alison Lynch, Class of 2026 Class President

Closing Remarks

Dr. M. Daniel Givens, Dean

Recognition: Music

Dr. Marion F. Ehrich, Professor Emerita, Biomedical Sciences and Pathobiology

Dr. Thomas E. Cecere, Associate Professor, Biomedical Sciences and Pathobiology

2026 DOCTOR OF VETERINARY MEDICINE GRADUATES

Katherine Agster
Amelia Elizabeth Aiken
Danielle Mae Alms
Jamie DeAnne Angle
Shannen Jo Auffarth
Sebastien Joseph Banos
Elizabeth Grace Barry
Niamh-Marie Patricia Batstone
Alyssa Marie Blancke
Natalie Claire Bolin
Cathryn Makayla Bowling
Acadia Boyd
Colin Patrick Boyle
Michelle Nicole Brennaman
Delaney Briscoe
Jacquelynn Bubier
Haley Paige Burger
Laurel Moore Carter
Taylor Cefalo
Christa Lynn Clark
Ashley Thursby Clements
Madison Elizabeth Cogle
Brett Patrick Connolly
Andrea Jimei Connor
Mia Marie Damiano
Georgia Anne Daniel
Taylor Elisse Downing
Jordan Christopher Eadie
Rebecca Jane Enger
Lauren Ashley Evans
Gabriel Maynor Falcon
Kayla Rose Fay

Daniel Fields
Brittney Nicole Fogg
Jessica Margaret Gainé
Luke Anderson Garges
Kenzie Todd George
Kelli Ann Gillespie
Briana Sarah Gleizer
Noah Joel Goldfarb
Meredith Chapman Gregg
Brynna Marie Gyuricsko
Nina Magdalena Havelka
Cecily Sharbel Hayek
Thomas Calhoun Heck
Ethan Jacob Heiberger
Illiana Isabella Hins
Sean Michael Horne
Rachael Michelle Horton
Thomas Cody Howard
Ezekiel Jennette
Benjamin Michael Jewusiak
Ryan Jordan
Katherine Margaret Karlen
Danielle Nicole Kila
Samantha Reagan King
Jax Lane Knott
Logan Danielle Kruse
Emily Kutskel
Diana Abigail Lemus
Mariah Liane Casaday Long
Alison Michelle Lynch
Lauren Alexandra Maghak
McKenna Marian Maloney

Elena Alexandra Mantis
Alexander Blair Marsh
Kiana Martinez
Camryn Jane McCloskey
Brianna Leigh McPhail
Skylar Ashton Merkle
Mackenzi Lee Mills
Jasmine Gabrielle Morgan
Taylor L. Mortensen
Autumn Gabrielle Mullins
Sean Patrick Murray
Christian William Nase
Nicholas Terrance Nase
Elizabeth Marie Niesz
Gianna Novak
Kaitlyn Lee Oliphant
Leslie Anne Orndoff
Tyler Brian Parlo
Maxwell Thomas Pasquinelli
Kruti Chirag Patel
Aida Estefania Pereyra Cruzado
Stephanie Pfortsch
Matthew Robert Porter
Alicia Marie Pyne
Jolie Elizabeth Quiros
Shade Allen Rader
Shreya Ram
Abigail Catherine Reilly
Sophia Baumer Rhoads
Cheyenne Lynn Roderick
Brianna Nicole Romagnano
Hailey M. Roman

Healy Rosenberg
Amanda Rosendo Ocasio
Mariah Marshelle Sands
Lauren Nicole Ginefra Savastano
Mikel N. Shabloski
Emma C. Shanabrook
Cole Thomas Shapiro
Jas-Lynn Kaur Singh
Mary Frances Rose Smith
Teresa Morgan Stabler
Molly Ferguson Staker
Casey Stallman
Elizabeth Quinn Sterling
Jalea Marie Stevens
Nicole Elizabeth Tczap-Otis
Erin Nicole Thetga
Helena Jean Trevor
Shelly Yvonne Underwood
Kate Marie Uray
Madison Ladin Warner
Shelby Paige Watson
Baker Keegan White
Katelyn Wilkosz
Nonye J. Williams
Danielle Shannon Witt
Michelle Lynn Yohe
Samantha Michelle Zolkiewicz
Caitlin Elise Zvoloski

NATIONAL SOCIETY OF PHI ZETA, CHI CHAPTER

Membership in Phi Zeta, the national honor society of veterinary medicine, is awarded to seniors in the top 25 percent of their class. Phi Zeta recognizes outstanding scholarship, represents the veterinary profession's constant advancement, and promotes research in matters pertaining to the welfare and diseases of animals.

Phi Zeta members in the Class of 2026

Elizabeth Grace Barry
Colin Patrick Boyle
Michelle Nicole Brennaman
Jacquelynn Bubier
Laurel Moore Carter
Mia Marie Damiano
Kayla Rose Fay
Daniel Fields
Briana Sarah Gleizer
Brynna Marie Gyuricsko
Thomas Cody Howard
Samantha Reagan King
Jax Lane Knott
Diana Abigail Lemus
Elena Alexandra Mantis
Brianna Leigh McPhail

Jasmine Gabrielle Morgan
Autumn Gabrielle Mullins
Nicholas Terrance Nase
Kaitlyn Lee Oliphant
Kruti Chirag Patel
Jolie Elizabeth Quiros
Shreya Ram
Mikel N. Shabloski
Casey Stallman
Kate Marie Uray
Madison Ladin Warner
Shelby Paige Watson
Katelyn Wilkosz
Danielle Shannon Witt
Caitlin Elise Zyvoloski

U. S. ARMY VETERINARY CORPS

The Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP) is a highly competitive scholarship program offered to DVM students nationwide during their first year of veterinary school. Upon acceptance, students are commissioned as 2nd lieutenants in the U.S. Army Medical Service Corps and train each summer in preparation for active duty. In addition to the HPSP, a direct commissioning program is offered to graduates of accredited schools of veterinary medicine in the U.S.; appointments to the U.S. Army Veterinary Corps are made at the rank of captain.

Upon graduation, HPSP students are promoted to captain and receive their first duty assignment. As the only veterinarians within the Department of Defense, Army Veterinary Corps officers provide animal care to government-owned and privately owned animals of service members; food safety and defense; public health; military medical research; and training to all branches of the military, as well as federal agencies at more than 1,000 locations in more than 40 countries.

U.S. Army Veterinary Corps Members in the Class of 2026

Daniel Fields



VETERINARIAN'S OATH

Being admitted to the profession of veterinary medicine,

I solemnly swear

to use my scientific knowledge and skills

for the benefit of society

through the protection of animal health and welfare,

the prevention and relief of animal suffering,

the conservation of animal resources,

the promotion of public health,

and the advancement of medical knowledge.

I will practice my profession conscientiously,

with dignity,

and in keeping with the principles

of veterinary medical ethics.

I accept as a lifelong obligation,

the continual improvement of my professional

knowledge and competence.

COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER

Dr. Roger Ramirez Barrios



Roger Ramirez Barrios, clinical associate professor of veterinary parasitology, has been recognized for his work in the laboratory and the classroom.

Ramirez Barrios is the 2023 Zoetis Research Award recipient for his laboratory's work on two parasites that pose health risks to humans and animals: *Echinococcus multilocularis* and *Trypanosoma cruzi*.

But he takes even more joy influencing students, for which he was honored by the Virginia Veterinary Medical Association with its Mentor of the Year award for 2023.

Empathy is at the core of his mentorship philosophy. He is upfront with students about his

own insecurities and imperfections, and in showing his humanity, connects with his students. He emphasizes an open-door policy: Anyone can come to him for guidance or to talk about their concerns.

"I want them to succeed in life," said Ramirez Barrios. "I want them to be very good human beings and excellent veterinarians as well. "

Ramirez Barrios joined VMCVM in 2020. He had been a professor of veterinary parasitology and parasitic diseases of domestic animals at Universidad del Zulia in his native Venezuela from 1999 to 2017, before becoming a postdoctoral associate at the University of Minnesota Duluth Medical School and an assistant professor at St. Michael's College in Vermont before arriving at Virginia Tech.

Ramirez Barrios has a Ph.D. in Animal Medicine and Health from University de Cordoba in Cordoba Spain; an M.S. in Teaching in Higher Education from Universidad Rafael Maria Baralt in Cabimas, Venezuela; and a DVM from Universidad del Zulia in Maracaibo, Venezuela.

RICHARD B. TALBOT MEMORIAL AWARD

Valedictorian Dr. Mia Damiano



Mia Damiano is the Richard B. Talbot Award Winner as the student with the top grade point average in the DVM Class of 2026 at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine.

Damiano, from Springfield, Virginia, did not grow up dreaming of becoming a veterinarian. The daughter of an Air Force colonel, she moved frequently as a child and once imagined following her father into the military. Instead, a love for the family cats, a talent for science, and a knack for problem-solving led her to veterinary medicine – a field she realized could combine all three.

After earning her undergraduate degree at Clemson University, Damiano set her sights on veterinary school, bringing with her a deep love for animals and a determination to work hard.

"I told myself, I'm just going to work really hard and see where that gets me," Damiano said. "And here I am."

As a veterinary student, Damiano worked throughout her clinical years in the ICU, where she credits veterinary technicians with building much of her hands-on confidence. One of her most memorable cases involved a critically ill German shepherd named Laika, whose recovery reinforced her passion for being present for both animals and their families on their hardest days.

Damiano plans to move to Phoenix, Arizona, for a one-year mentorship program rotating through general practice, emergency, and shelter medicine, with hopes of pursuing a residency in emergency and critical care and a future in veterinary academia.

VIRGINIA-MARYLAND COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

Faculty & Distinguished Dignitaries

Dr. M. Daniel Givens, Dean

Dr. Margie D. Lee, Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies,
Director, Biomedical and Veterinary Sciences Graduate Program

Dr. Sunshine Lahmers, Associate Dean, Professional Programs

Dr. Roger Ramirez Barrios, Executive Director for DVM Enrollment
and Student Services

Dr. Xiaoping Zhu, Associate Dean, Maryland Campus

Dr. Tanya LeRoith, Director, Veterinary Teaching Hospital and Director, ViTALS

Dr. Michael Erskine, Director, Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center

Distinguished Dignitaries

Dr. Wendy Powers, Dean, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Dr. Cyril R. Clarke, Former Dean and Former Executive Vice President and Provost

Dr. Gerhardt Schurig, Former Dean

Dr. Peter Eyre, Former Dean

Dr. Kelly Catanzaro, VMCVM Alumni Board of Directors, President

Dr. John Brooks, Past AVMA Executive Board Chair

Biomedical Sciences and Pathobiology

I. Blader,
Department Head

S. Ahmed

I. C. Allen

F. Carvallo

C. Caswell

T. Cecere

S. Coutermarsh-Ott

J. Davis

S. Diab

N. Duggal

F. Elnady

S. Farris

R. Gaji

T. Gillian

E. Gloag

S. Guynn

A. Hassebroek

J. He

W. R. Huckle

Y. Kani

K. Kehn-Hall

K. Lahmers

M. D. Lee

T. LeRoith

X. Luo

S. Mei

X. J. Meng

P. Morton

K. Mulvaney

C. Pacholec

Y. A. Pan

R. Ramirez Barrios

J. Romero-Masters

Y. Sassi

M. Seleem

S. A. Smith

T. Southard

N. Strandberg

S. Swanger

M. Theus

J. D. Weger

H. Xie

J. Yu

L. Yuan

K. L. Zimmerman

Large Animal Clinical Sciences

C. R. Byron,
Department Head

M. N. Adams

J. G. Barrett

S. H. Bogers

L. R. Trager Burns

T. Burns

E. F. Claffey

S. G. Clark

J. D. Cowley

J. F. Currin

S. A. Dukti

C. K. Enriquez

M. D. Erskine

K. Estell

R. A. Funk

E. K. Ludwig

E. MacDonald

M. Marchitello

R. D. McCarthy

H. C. McKenzie III

E. Meira

A. M. Rangel

A. M. Santonastaso

E. Schaefer

J. L. Secoura

J. Stewart

S. G. Umaña Sedó

K. E. Wilson

J. T. Winslow

S. G. Witonsky

G. M. Zannotto

**Small Animal
Clinical Sciences**

P. N. Henao-Guerrero,
Department Head
I. Athanasiadi
O. Balogh
F. Bliss
M. Borgarelli
R. E. Carpenter
J. Cecere
L. Chang
B. Conner
S. DeMonaco
M. Edwards
A. Figueiredo
R. Foster
M. D. Freeman
M. Goodnight
I. P. Herring
T. Ishihara
H. Jeong
T. Julien
M. Kato
A. Keebaugh
S. Lahmers
O. I. Lanz
E. Lawrence
J. Marin
B. Manning
G. Menciotti
M. T. Nappier
J. Nightingale
V. Paranjape
C. Park
R. Parker
L. Parkhurst
R. Persons
E. Phoenix
R. Ramos
I. Ravera
J. H. Rossmeisl
R. Shinn
M. Simons
C. Snead
J. Sosnicki
H. L. Tham
G. Togawa
J. L. Tuohy
M. L. Vega
H. Wachtel
A. Wilkinson

**Population
Health Sciences**

J. Eberth,
Department Head
E. Austin
Associate Dean
A. S. Bertke
R. Calder
A. Cohen
N. Cook
C. Deagle
Y. Gautam
J. M. Gohlke
N. Holt
K. W. Hosig
L. Hungerford
L. Lee
K. Lewis
C. L. Rist
C. Ruktanonchai
N. Ruktanonchai
A. Ruple
A. Savage
A. Smith
B. Thompson
S. G. Wenzel
S. R. Werre

**Veterinary Medicine,
University of Maryland**

G. Belov
A. Burglund
S. Dickey
M. Ghanem
W. Li
D. Nelson
U. Pal
J. Park
S. Riley
M. Shi
N. L. Tablante Jr.
E. G. Viktorova
X. Yang
Y. L. Zhang

Emeriti Faculty

R. J. Avery
D. L. Barber
D. J. Blodgett
J. M. Bowen
S. M. Boyle
V. A. Buechner-Maxwell
C. B. Carrig
D. Cordes
L. A. Dahlgren
G. B. Daniel
M. F. Ehrlich
L. A. Eng
P. Eyre
L. E. Freeman
G. F. Fregin
D. Hodgson
J. L. Hodgson
V. Hugo
B. S. Jortner
B. G. Klein
V. Kok
C. Larsen
M. M. Larson
J. C. Lee
M. S. Lieb
J. B. Meldrum
H. Misra
W. E. Monroe
D. M. Moore
D. L. Panciera
K. D. Pelzer
C. J. Pfeiffer
J. P. Pickett
F. W. Pierson
R. S. Pleasant
B. J. Purswell
R. Pyle
V. E. Ragan
K. J. Redican
K. Roberts
G. K. Saunders
W. K. Scarratt
G. Schurig
B. Smith
D. P. Sponenberg
W. S. Swecker, Jr.
T. E. Toth
G. C. Troy
G. Turnwald
N. A. White
J. R. Wilcke
A. M. Zajac



YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY ...



CONGRATULATIONS, CLASS OF

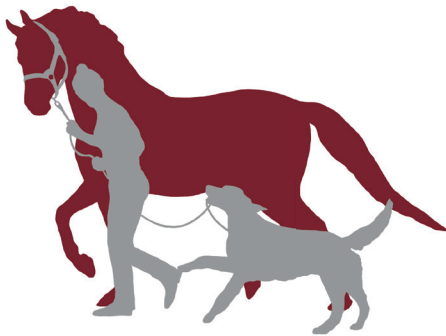
2026

VIRGINIA-MARYLAND COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

Founded in 1980, the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine is a leading biomedical teaching and research center, enrolling more than 492 Doctor of Veterinary Medicine students, 107 Bachelor of Science in Public Health students, 37 Master of Public Health students, and 93 biomedical and veterinary sciences masters and Ph.D. students.

The college is a partnership between the land-grant universities, Virginia Tech and the University of Maryland. The college's main campus in Blacksburg, Virginia, features the Veterinary Teaching Hospital and large animal field services, which together treat more than 83,000 animals annually. Other locations include the Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center in Leesburg, Virginia, the Animal Cancer Care and Research Center in Roanoke, Virginia and the Gudelsky Veterinary Center in College Park, Maryland.

The college's 4,004 DVM alumni work in private practice, in industry, and in local, state, and federal agencies. College faculty and students also conduct a broad spectrum of basic/molecular and translational/applied research that is strongly focused on animal health and productivity, and human health and well-being.







Virginia-Maryland
College of
Veterinary Medicine

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