In the United States alone, there are close to 70 million dogs, 74 million cats, 8 million birds, and 5 million horses, along with specialty and exotic animals. Combine that number with worldwide species, consider existing and emerging diseases, and it is clear that our students will be in high demand in today’s global society.

Richard A. French, DVM, M.S., Ph.D.
Dean of the School of Animal Studies and Allerton Chair of Animal Health Sciences

“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...”

— American Veterinary Medical Association

In 2010, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Executive Board approved new language for the Veterinarian’s Oath to emphasize not only protecting animal health, but also animal welfare, and not only relieving animal suffering, but also preventing it. “This provides a strong indication of the need to think beyond treatment to prevention and treatment, and to consider the critical relationship between animal health and human health,” says Richard A. French, DVM, M.S., Ph.D., dean of Becker College’s School of Animal Studies and Allerton Chair of Animal Health Sciences. French, a veterinary pathologist who is an expert in zoonotic diseases (diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans, particularly those with public health significance like H1N1, bird flu, and Ebola) and other emerging diseases in humans, pets, and food animals, has written extensively on infectious disease. He has served as an instructor and collaborator with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Plum Island Animal Disease Center, and with the Agricultural Research Service and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

His co-authored article in Science served as the first report of West Nile virus in the northern hemisphere, and he has written on such topics as animal obesity, emergency preparedness, emergent diseases, and more.

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“Our goal is to provide a pipeline of knowledgeable and highly skilled graduates who are well prepared for the global animal care challenges of today and tomorrow.”

Externship sites for students in the School of Animal Studies—which include veterinary clinics, zoos, animal shelters, research institutions, and more—have expanded to more than 350 locations. Locations shown do not include sites across the United States and abroad. The number of sites will increase, both in number and diversity, to provide students with real-world skills and knowledge.

Becker College is located in the center of the largest conglomeration of life science industries in the world, which includes veterinary, paraveterinary, and supporting industries.

Enrollment in the animal studies programs has grown by 30 percent since 2008, with a four-fold increase expected by 2020. “Our students will be entering occupations that have projected growth as fast or faster than average, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics,” says French. “The demand is definitely there.” The School of Animal Studies has competitively distinguished itself nationally: it is number 1 in New England and among the top-15 producers nationally among four-year private institutions in awarding undergraduate animal studies degrees; one of the 10 largest producers of undergraduate veterinary technology degrees among four-year private institutions; and one of only two private colleges in New England to offer AVMA-accredited undergraduate programs in veterinary technology. The School oversees a fully operational veterinary clinic, open to the public, which provides students with hands-on clinical experience.

(Veterinary schools attended by Becker graduates)

- Iowa State University
- Kansas State University
- Louisiana State University
- Michigan State University
- Mississippi State University
- Murdoch University (Australia)
- North Carolina State University
- The Ohio State University
- Oklahoma State University
- Ross University (St. Kitts)
- Royal Veterinary College (London, UK)
- St. George’s University (Grenada)
- Tufts University
- University of Florida
- University of Dublin (Ireland)
- University of Edinburgh (Scotland)
- University of Glasgow (Scotland)
- University of Illinois
- University of Melbourne (Australia)
- University of Minnesota
- University of Tennessee
- University of Virginia/Maryland

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“Animal health is the key to human health, as many diseases pass from animals to people,” he explains. “A decade ago Thomas L. Friedman’s book, The World Is Flat, made us more aware of how small our planet has become. It has also made us more mindful about the presence and spread of communicable diseases from animals to humans. These were once considered ‘foreign animal diseases,’ but they are now called ‘trans-boundary diseases’ because of how the movement of people, commerce, and animals has changed in a global society. Issues of animal health and welfare as well as food safety and security are global in scope, requiring those who are educating students to enter occupations treating animals to provide them with the skills and knowledge needed to handle day-to-day care, develop their knowledge about the relationship between animal and human health, and expand their skills and expertise in handling both current and emergent global health issues.”

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Initiatives now underway for expansion in the School of Animal Studies include:

- **Collaboration with the Veterinary Centers of America (VCA),** which will enable the Lenfest Animal Health Center—the College’s on-campus public teaching veterinary clinic—to be open year-round, thereby expanding students’ clinical experience.

- **Launch of a pilot externship with the University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS),** which provides students with access to UMMS staff and facilities while learning about animal care, use, and welfare in biomedical research.

- **Expansion of senior student externships,** which currently totals more than 350 affiliated sites.

- **Collaboration between the School of Animal Studies and the College’s interactive media program** to build an interactive teaching tool as a follow-up to the School’s first responder training workshop in handling equine emergencies, which was held at the College’s Equestrian Center.

- **Expansion of the College’s Equestrian Center** to include agricultural animals, to enhance the requirements for the School’s AVMA-accredited programs.

- **Conceptual planning for a Center for Animal Health and Biomedical Sciences,** which will expand academic programs into biotechnology and biomedical sciences, with a focus on animal care/use and advancements in research modeling and simulations.

“Moving forward, we will continue to strengthen the reputation and visibility of the School not only for the benefit of our students—many of whom achieve jobs at prestigious businesses or attend graduate schools across the nation and around the world—but also for building upon our expertise,” says French. “Our goal is to provide a pipeline of knowledgeable and highly skilled graduates who are well prepared for the global animal care challenges of today and tomorrow.”

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— Richard A. French, DVM, M.S., Ph.D.