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Warnick urges new veterinarians to be grateful in life

By Krishna Ramanujan

Alexandra Herestofa wanted to be a veterinarian since kindergarten.

"I've always loved animals, I had a special bond to my own pets," she said, adding that she admired the veterinarians who cared for her pets. This weekend marks a major step in her lifelong pursuit.

Herestofa and 97 other doctor of veterinary medicine (DVM) graduates, and two doctoral graduates, were recognized May 27 in Bailey Hall at the College of Veterinary Medicine's Hooding Ceremony for the Class of 2017.

In his address, Dr. Lorin Warnick, Ph.D. '94, the Austin O. Hooley Dean of Veterinary Medicine, said human beings have a "powerful ability to envision the future." Commencement weekend offers a moment to celebrate and reflect on the accomplishment of earning a veterinary degree and to "plan for new opportunities, and to answer that all-important question of 'what's next?'" Warnick said.

In pursuit of their DVM degrees, students spent approximately 2,500 hours in labs, tutorials, exams and courses, and another 2,800 in clinical rotations. Those hours don't include time spent studying and pursuing extracurricular activities, he said.



Chris Kitchen/University Photography
Dr. Lorin Warnick, Ph.D. '94, the Austin O. Hooley Dean of Veterinary Medicine, honors one of the 98 doctor of veterinary medicine graduates May 27 in Bailey Hall.



When the students' degrees are conferred May 28, they will join a community of more than 5,000 Cornell veterinary college alumni all over the world, Warnick said.

Most graduates will start the next phase of their professional careers in private practices, on farms, in universities, in shelters, in labs and nonprofits,

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Members of the Class of 2017 take the veterinarian's oath, administered by Margaret Thompson, president of the New York State Veterinary Medical Society and director of the Cornell University Hospital for Animals.

"from North to South and coast to coast, and a few in the Midwest," Warnick said. Three graduates will

move as far as Alaska, England and Argentina to start their careers. They will go into shelter medicine, lab animal medicine, poultry, small ruminants, dairy, exotics, wildlife conservation, biomedical sciences, anatomic pathology and equine, canine and feline medicine.

Warnick recalled an eager and cheerful student assigned to ride with him during his residency at the ambulatory clinic. Warnick and the student had received an emergency call at 4 a.m. one cold winter morning for "a dairy cow who had cast her withers," meaning she had a prolapsed uterus, "one of the most challenging and physically demanding procedures for a bovine veterinarian," he said. During the difficult procedure, with the temperature at 10 degrees in the barn, Warnick was exhausted. As dawn was breaking, the student said with great sincerity, "But Dr. Warnick, isn't it great to be up this time of day?"

"Looking back now, I realize that kind of positive outlook is a treasure," Warnick said. He has learned "happiness leads to success rather than the other way around," that it can be acquired, and that "one of the principal factors in predicting happiness is gratitude," he said. "And beyond this weekend, if this isn't something that comes naturally, and I know it doesn't for all of us, add to your quotidian habits the practice of recognizing the good things you experience and expressing gratitude to people around you. Doing so will bring many returns in happiness, professional success and fulfillment," Warnick said.



Chris Kitchen/University Photography

Dr. Lorin Warnick delivers his address at the College of Veterinary Medicine's 2017 Hooding Ceremony.

Dr. Margaret Thompson, president of the New York State Veterinary Medical Society and director of the Cornell University Hospital for Animals, led the graduating class in taking the veterinarian's oath. After that, Warnick and Katherine Edmondson, assistant dean for learning and instruction, began the procession for placing the symbolic hood on each graduate.

Following the ceremony, Ricardo de Matos, senior lecturer of zoological medicine, was named the 2017 Zoetis Distinguished Teacher.

Later at a reception, Herestofa looked forward to a shelter medicine internship with the San Diego Humane Society. "I'm excited to have the chance to save lives for animals and change lives for humans," she said.