



## College News

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### **\$10 million gift establishes canine genomics program**



Cornell University President David Skorton has announced a \$10 million anonymous gift for the College of Veterinary Medicine from an anonymous donor to establish the world's first canine genomics program. The largest single gift in the college's history, the gift will support investments in three areas: endowed professorships and faculty start-ups, DNA sequencing, and the DNA Bank, which is an archive of DNA and medical information that defines inherited diseases. Research conducted through the program will further scientists' understanding of and ability to fight cancer and other diseases that attack animals and humans.

In his announcement, Skorton underscored the impact of the gift, saying, "To have a university supporter step forward with a gift of such magnitude and purpose is an extraordinary statement. At Cornell and throughout higher education, resources to invest in faculty and new programs are scarce, which makes this gift all the more meaningful."

"With this gift, we will leverage the information embedded in canine genetics – available after hundreds of years of selective breeding – for the benefit of animals and humans," said Michael I. Kotlikoff, the Austin O. Hooey Dean of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell. "We know that each breed possesses a unique and highly similar collection of genes, which confer susceptibility to certain diseases and constitute a stunning opportunity for gene association studies that cannot be performed in people. These investigations can be done non-invasively in dogs and will inform our understanding of the specific genes that result in susceptibility to some of our most serious diseases."

Faculty, alumni, and stakeholders identified advancing translational research as a strategic priority for the College in 2009. With the initial investment from the gift, the College will conduct a national search for a tenure-track faculty member in biostatistics to lead the comparative genomics effort, a position that will enhance genetics research throughout the College. Once this process is complete, the College will begin recruiting for a second faculty position in cancer biology. The gift will endow both positions in perpetuity and provide the opportunity for their holders to secure external research funding.

"The recognition of the commonality of disease between animals and man precedes modern medical education and

continues to drive discovery that informs animal and human health,” said Kotlikoff. “What better gift could man's best friend provide than the information necessary to more fully understand and combat these devastating human and animal diseases. This inspiring gift will have an enormous impact on both canine and human health and is testimony to the vision and generosity of one of the College's most committed friends.”