Early next year the Allen School will celebrate its 10th anniversary. We are starting the festivities early with the appointment of Dr. Tom Kawula as the new director. Tom brings a rare combination of talents including internationally recognized scholarship, educational leadership, and a commitment to the humanitarian values, which are central to the school’s mission. As a renowned infectious diseases scientist, Tom adds to the breadth and depth of expertise in zoonotic diseases within the faculty. But it is his record of innovation in graduate education and his dedication to mentoring students, fellows, and young faculty that caught the attention of the search committee. Allen School students engage in multiple graduate programs at WSU, reflecting the diversity of disciplinary expertise needed to address global health problems, and conduct research in multiple global sites as well as in the Allen Center’s state-of-the-art laboratories.

Innovative global health education, especially in equal partnerships with institutions in developing countries where demand is rapidly increasing, will be a challenge and an opportunity for WSU and the Allen School. Tom’s experience and expertise will be an ideal fit. In terms of timing, Tom’s arrival comes as an exciting chapter unfolds at WSU with the development of the new Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine. Tom spent most of his career in the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, but also has experience at two colleges of veterinary medicine, a combination that will help guide WSU in maximizing our

Meet the Paul G. Allen School for Global Animal Health’s New Director: Five Questions with Dr. Tom Kawula

Can you tell us a little about yourself?
For the past 34 years when anyone asked me this question all I had to do was say that I was born and raised in Idaho, and it was enough to launch an entire dinner conversation. I’ve enjoyed describing to people what it was like to grow up in the west, and the fact that Idaho borders Washington and Canada, not Illinois. I guess I’m going to have to find a new opening line. My wife Carol and I have lived the majority of our lives in North Carolina, and we have grown some deep roots and lifelong friendships. I have to confess that we have become accustomed to fall weather lasting through Christmas, winter ending in February, and thunder storms that will knock your socks off. Oh, and grits. Do any restaurants in Pullman sell slow cooked grits?

What excites you most about your new position as director of the Allen School?
The short answer is that the Allen School’s mission and approach to improving global health and health disparities reflects my personal values

Message Continues
Dr. Tom Kawula Continued

and professional goals. Like most people I want to work at something that is meaningful and has lasting positive impact. At the heart of the school's mission is that most human health issues are inextricably linked with animal health, but it is more complicated than simply knowing some infectious agents can jump species. The school was launched with the understanding that individual disciplines cannot adequately address human or animal health. Collaborative research across disciplines is something I have advocated throughout my career. I am hopeful I can help to steer the school's developing culture to one of mutual respect, collaboration, and research excellence that will benefit animal and human health. Another big draw for me is WSU is launching a medical school, which represents a huge opportunity for creating efforts at solving complicated human and animal health issues.

Can you share a little about your career?

I went to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for my doctorate because at the time it was one of the few places where faculty were applying new molecular biology approaches to understanding infectious disease processes. After a postdoc at North Carolina State College of Veterinary Medicine, I got my first faculty job at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. In 1992, I returned to Chapel Hill where I was faculty until now. My research includes understanding pathogenic mechanisms of infectious agents and how they relate to human health. I also learned very early on that I love, and am pretty good at, graduate student training and career development. During the six years I was the director of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology's graduate studies, we averaged 50 doctoral students in our program, and in the graduate school I developed interdisciplinary research and education programs. More recently I directed a National Science Foundation funded program to expose undergraduates from underrepresented minorities to research in biological sciences.

What might our college be surprised to know about you?

I was a bacteriology and biochemistry major at the University of Idaho, but honestly, at that time, I was a little lost about what I might do for a career until I met professor Lois Miller. A world-renowned geneticist who, among other things, developed Bacillus naegleri and gene expression systems. She was tough, never smiled, and never gave any indication of what she thought of you. On the last day of class, she returned our final exams. She put mine on my desk and said, “Turn it over.” On the back was a note that read: You are talented. You should consider going into research. “Think about it,” she said. So I did. I saw Lois at a conference about 15 years later. I introduced myself, told her I was an assistant professor at UNC and thanked her for the encouraging note that gave me direction. She looked puzzled and said, “That doesn’t sound like something I would do.”

What is your vision for the Allen School over the next year?

Five years?

I don't think of the Allen School as a five-year project. Five years? That sounds like something I would do. Overall, my goal is for WSU to be recognized as an international leader in establishing solutions to health problems and disparities.

World Rabies Day

is Wednesday, September 28

Join us in the effort to eliminate rabies globally and help move us closer to a world where no child dies from canine rabies. Together we can make a difference. Visit EliminateRabies.wsu.edu.

Message from the Director Continued

collective impact to improve health for everyone, everywhere. On behalf of the faculty, staff, students, and our incredible network of donors, we welcome Tom and can’t wait to see what the next 10 years brings.

Guy Palmer
Creighton Endowed Chair and WSU Senior Director of Global Health

Faculty News

Dr. Douglas Call, Eric Lofgren, Guy Palmer, and Shira Broschat are collaborators on the new Community Health Analytics Initiative, funded by the WSU Office of Research Grand Challenges grant program. The project will establish a large-scale interdisciplinary program in computational and analytics based health care and medical sciences research at WSU. With permanent University funds and matching college funds, the $5 million investment includes hiring two new faculty members in the Allen School. The initiative is a collaborative effort between the Volland College of Engineering and Architecture, the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine, and the College of Veterinary Medicine.

Dr. Tom Kawula Q&A

Hometown:
Moscow, Idaho

Alma Mater:
University of Idaho
(B.S. and M.S. degrees)

University of North Carolina
(Ph.D. in microbiology and immunology)

Pets:

Hobbies:
Gardening, hiking, skiing. Anything outdoors.

Favorite book:
*Angle of Repose* by Wallace Stegner. Also his mother's favorite book.

Family:
Mert his wife, Carol, of 34 years in high school. They have three grown children. A daughter, Paige, and two sons, Evan and Graham.

Student and Fellow News

Ashley Railey, a doctoral student in the Allen School, spent three months in Tanzania collecting data for her research with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation funded Program for Enhancing the Health and Productivity of Livestock. Her work will assess whether farmers are willing to pay for vaccinations and diagnostic testing for foot-and-mouth disease in cattle. Railey spent six months taking classes at the Nelson Mandela African Institute of Science and Technology in Arusha, Tanzania before conducting surveys about basic household demographics, livestock movements, and household willingness to pay for disease control methods. She also taught survey participants about the complexity of the disease through visual aids and discussions.